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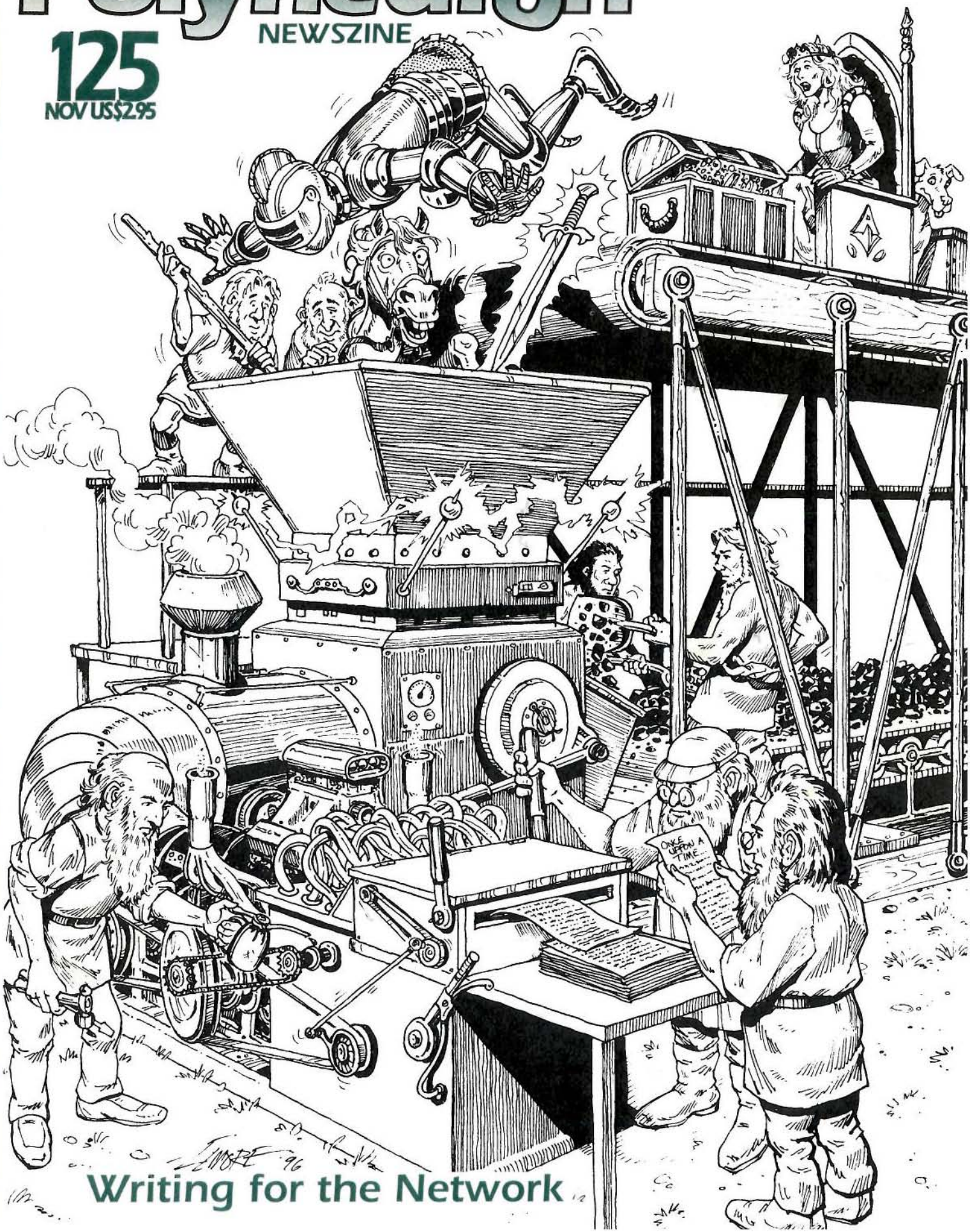

Writing for the Network

Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

Volume 16
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your initiative

More letters. Read 'em. Write 'em. 'Rithmetic 'em.

Greetings Jeff! (and HQ staffers)

Am writing in response to the letters from Erik Benson, Wes Nicholson, and Rick Vogel. Please, allow me to retort.

I agree with Rick Vogel and his assessment of what POLYHEDRON® should be. The main thing that has drawn me into and kept me as a member of the RPGA® Network is the opportunity to frequent conventions! They are and will be the best place to meet gamers from all over the world. POLYHEDRON is one of the best places to find info on conventions and a reduction of convention coverage will directly impact my participation as an RPGA member.

Rick is correct in pointing out that there are other magazines devoted to improving RPGs—DRAGON® Magazine—Hello! So why not let this one be devoted to topics and events most commonly associated with the Network (i.e. conventions). I am not saying you should report on every table at a con but I think reducing convention coverage is a mistake.

Rick is also right about another thing, a very large core of Network members ARE frequent attendees of conventions. We have friends all over the country and cons are the only chance we get to play with these people. Obviously I also play in campaigns at home so ideas and articles geared towards that are welcome and used. But as far as I can tell, conventions are still the biggest aspect of the RPGA so I am a bit baffled at the notion of reducing their coverage.

The fact that Erik and Wes do not like LIVING CITY™ is fine. But why should my favorite campaign world be snuffed out because they are bitter about how they perceive it to be run? It is easy to get caught up in the bad aspects of LIVING CITY, but that is your own fault if you can't shrug the negative off for what it is. I have yet to see a perfect system or game. The idea of being able to put on the same hat at conventions all over the world is awesome. It provides you with an opportunity to show your creativity and at the same time see what other people think is cool in a character. Cisco Lopez-Fresquet, Bill Corey, Hans Nelson, Ed Gibson, Tony Scalise, Bruce Rabe... these are people I would have never have met or played with if it weren't for LIVING CITY. I have had to pick myself off the floor a number of times while playing with these people because I was having so much fun.

Erik and Wes seems to think there is no ROLE playing, only ROLL playing in LIVING CITY. They are flat out wrong. Some of the best role-players in the world participate in this campaign and to say that RAVENS BLUFF™ is the root of bad gaming in the Network is, well, ignorant.

Sorry if this came off as bitter but I do not like people telling me how, where, or why to play games.

Jeff, keep up your good work and open forum. Allowing people to flex their thoughts will let them become more active members.

Definitely sincerely,
Rick Brill
the GreyBeards
Superior, WI

Okay, we've heard from both sides of the "I love/hate the LIVING CITY campaign" topic. Anyone who plays knows there are flaws, but the campaign will continue, to your delight or chagrin.

From the letters and internet posts I've read, the well-documented problems with the LIVING CITY campaign seem to be: 1) power gaming and 2) lack of role-playing.

Having positively identified these, let's seriously ask ourselves, "What can we do to solve these problems?" Think about it. Then write me about it.

I also want to address the "con coverage" issue, but it's too big to do here. See this month's Notes From HQ, and the following letter for more on the subject.

Dear POLYHEDRON,

Even a relatively new member, such as I am, has noticed some changes going on in the Newsletter—for the better, I'd say.

To be a little more specific, I have to admit that I too thought the Newszine a little bit too much concerned with conventions (by publishing many articles about the LIVING™ campaigns as well as many about tournament guidelines). I certainly saw the need for POLYHEDRON to provide that information, so I didn't complain, but I seem not to be alone with this sentiment. I encourage you to provide those members who can't often visit conventions with possibilities to participate in LIVING campaigns other than at conventions—perhaps by providing contest like this Katanga design contest for the LIVING JUNGLE™ campaign?

In this regard, the thought of online conventions certainly appeals to me. It is a pity that I have had my greatest disappointment in the field. Upon gaining an internet account from the university where I study physics, the first thing I tried to do was reach this highly-praised web page of TSR. When I finally found it—my heart flying with anticipation—I was disappointed to find out that only AOL users could access it. I think that anyone should be allowed to visit TSR via internet. Even if this is not possible for the whole site, I do hope that it is for an upcoming RPGA site.

So, with the much-appreciated last issue of POLYHEDRON Newszine (#122) you seem to have succeeded in encouraging me to write to you, which I wanted to do for some time, but for which I never found enough courage. Thank you for your time reading this and in anticipation of your next issue of POLYHEDRON.

Yours sincerely,
Wolfgang Neckel
Vienna, Austria

Our RPGA Network site at AOL should be in full swing by the time you read this. Good for AOL users, bad for non-AOL users. Fortunately for you non-AOL users, we will have an official TSR web site for everybody before Christmas. Our online guy, Sean Reynolds, promises me it will have all the bells and whistles. So if it sucks, yell at him. Ha Ha! Just kidding! It won't suck because Sean's very cool and knows what he's doing, and we'll pummel him with several thousand leftover "Izzy" dolls if it does.

—JEFF

Polyhedron® NEWScene

This Year Thor, Can We Skip Hammer Throw?

We're near the end of the 1996 Network Decathlon, but don't give up yet! Here are the October standings for the Club Decathlon.

Note: some clubs were disqualified in the Club Newsletter category for not fulfilling all the requirements. For shame! Didn't you learn to follow directions in school?

And now, the tally:

Club Newsletter

First Place (4 pts)
David Flemming
Fellowship of the Black Spot
Ink Blot

Second Place (2 pts)
Glen R. Goodwin
Death Warmed Over
Death Warmed Over

Participating (1 pt)
Knights of the Empire
Knightlines
Rathskeller Gamers
Rathskeller Gazette

LIVING CITY™ NPC Villain

First Place (4 pts)
Carla Hollar
ARC Fellowship

Second Place (2 pts)
Susan Threadgill
Legion of the One Star

Participating (1 pt)
ARGH!
Fellowship of the Black Spot
Sunquest Partners
Utah Gaming Club
White Dove Society

New LIVING JUNGLE™ Spell

First Place (4 pts)
Susan Threadgill
Legion of the One Star

Second Place (2 pts)
David W. Baker
Rathskellar Gamers

Participating (1 pt)
Sunquest Partners

LIVING DEATH™ Encounter Site

First Place (4 pts)
Ramon Delgado
Legion of SilverSheen

Second Place (2 pts)
Glenn Smith
Sunquest Partners

LIVING JUNGLE, LIVING DEATH, Virtual Seattle One-Round Tournament

First Place (5 pts)
Jean Rabe
PM Players

Second Place (3 pts):
Andrew Hauptman
White Dove Society

Participating (1 pt)
ARC Fellowship
Death Warmed Over
FOG
Legion of the One Star
PGCO

One-Round Tournament

First Place (5 pts):
Ed Gibson
PGCO

Second Place (3 pts):
Brett & Cyndi Bakke
PM Players

Participating (1 pt)
Death Warmed Over
Legion of SilverSheen

Standings, October 1996

Club	Points
PGCO	10
PM Players	9
Rathskellar Gamers	7
Black Spot	6
DWO	6
Legion of One Star	5
Legion of SilverSheen	5
ARC Fellowship	5
ARGH!	4
Sunquest Partners	4
White Dove Society	4
FOG	3
GOAT	1
Utah Gaming Society	1
Knights of the Empire	1

But Did He Invest in a Ranger IRA?

Our gaming group is almost a club; we have three RPGA members and two more convinced. If we can get one more to join, we can have an actual club of six.

Our group of adventurers have had many a name since first level, names changing when we would have a change of staff (got a bunch of characters killed). At first level, we decided a wimp name was appropriate, so we dubbed ourselves the "Orc Bonkers" which caused us to become quite lucky for some time.

Our group consisted of a ranger and reluctant party leader, Clarence "Clay" Killmore; Mildred, the elf wizard; Machiavelli, the halfling thief; Gorth, the dwarf fighter; Elrose, the fighter/thief; and Morella, priest of Hermes, and avid self-healer.

There were two disturbing problems with this group: 1) only Clay and Gorth were of good alignment, and 2) no one but the leader had a last name.

I loved the way this group would destroy powerful foes with ease. We thought nothing of killing liches, greater mummies, and even a tanar'ri once. Conversely ,this same group would get crushed by weaker opponents.A dark naga, an evil cleric, skeletons, a few assassins... in all these fights, the group just unravelled.

The staff changed greatly with the deaths of Machiavelli, Gorth, Morella, and the retirement of Mildred and Elrose.

When our group finally disbanded at 8th and 9th levels, the lich, Kinslayer, killed half our replacements. The other half were banished to the seventh plane of hell. My character, Clay, was curiously absent from this fight, having retired one week before.

We had a great time with our Orc Bonkers despite our oddities.

—**Chandler R. Chapman**
Port Clinton, OH

send us your news

Role-playing games seem to have acronyms like Taco Bell has flies. To help you decipher the buzz, here are some we use in the RPGA Network (that's *Role Playing Game Association™* if you haven't been paying attention):

CCG—Collectible Card Game. Like Magic: the Gathering (M:tG). Not a role-playing acronym, but we use it enough to count.

LARP—Live Action Role-Playing. RPGs where you lose the table and run around in costumes.

LC—LIVING CITY. The RPGA flagship campaign. Other settings include: LJ (LIVING JUNGLE), LD (LIVING DEATH), VS (Virtual Seattle), and ToL (Threads of Legend).

RPG—Role-Playing Game. Nice 'n' easy.

TSR—nuthin. That's right kids, TSR doesn't stand for anything. At one point, TSR stood for *Tactical Studies Rules*, but these days it's just three letters before "Inc."

Don't Think of It as News. Think of It as Bragging Rights.

A Few of Our Favorite Things

Being a grAB baG of tRICKS, **tips**, and techniques to keep DMs IN CONTROL and players **entertained**

by Keith Strohm

At the '96 GEN CON® Game Fair, some of TSR's finest gaming minds sat as the panel of a seminar: "What's a DM to Do?" For those who didn't attend, here is the next installment by poetry-lovin' editor, Keith Strohm, who is currently hard at work on the second installment of the Monstrous Arcana™ *line, the Sahuagin.*

When Organizing, Gather All Participants and State Your Expectations.

What level of commitment do you expect from players (how often do you want to meet, how long, what time will the game begin)? What kind of campaign do you run (high-magic, low-magic, munchkin's delight, etc.)? What kind of role-playing are you looking for (role vs. roll)? These are all important points to cover before beginning play.

Discussing your expectations will lead to a lower incidence of player problems. After all, the player who enjoys hacking his way through every problem and wielding artifacts by 3rd level will probably not be happy playing Conan in your city-based, politically oriented campaign. Finding this out before you begin is always better than discovering it during the game.

Allow Players to Describe Their Expectations.

What sort of role-playing do *they* enjoy, what do *they* look for in a campaign? Not only will this allow the player to decide whether he wants to play in your campaign, but it may just give you adventure and campaign ideas to keep this player interested throughout the campaign.

Before Beginning Character Creation, Discuss Your House Rules or Rules Modifications.

Make sure every player understands that these rules are in effect during game play. Ask your players if they have any house rules they normally use. The group as a whole, with you as final arbiter, can then discuss and evaluate if these rules are appropriate to this campaign. Clearly marking house rules cuts down on squabbling and questions that slow the game and interrupt the flow of role-playing. In addition, discussion of players' house rules opens the DM to new, and possibly helpful ways of running the game.

Be Consistent In Applying the Rules

This ranks as one of the most important points to successful DMing. Mistakes occur, but if you make a mistake, admit it and rectify the situation. If the mistake happened several hours/game sessions ago, apologize to the players, and discuss it with them *after* the game session. Nothing breaks up a good game like a roundtable discussion of rules, or a shouting match where a DM insists he's right and the players are wrong.

If the mistake was more immediate and cost a character his life or ruined the plot, consider running the combat over again, or allow the player to be resurrected without penalty. *It is clearly unfair to penalize a player for your mistake!*

If a Player is Consistently Belligerent, Immature, Offensive, or Downright Contrary, Ask Him to Leave.

Do not invite that player back for another session. It's that simple. People play role-playing games to enjoy themselves. Nobody has to put up with someone who consistently ruins the fun.

However, if you decide that a player must go, be responsible enough to tell him yourself. Not only does this demonstrate maturity on your part, it also gives both of you the possibility of discussing the issue. The player in question may not know that he or she is ruining other people's enjoyment. Talking it over may, in fact, open the player's eyes, and allow him to grow in his understanding of what role-playing is about—if not now, then sometime in the future when or if he plays in another gaming group.

❑

In coming months, we plan on collecting useful DM hints from industry pros.

But what about you? What are your ideas about how to DM? We don't need a whole article, just send your best tips and tricks to:

"Favorite Things"
c/o RPGA
201 Sheridan Springs Rd.
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

The Border Kingdoms

Elminster's Everwinking Eye

High Emmerock

by Ed Greenwood

Our tour of the Border Kingdoms continues fair apace with a look at one of Elminster's favorite backwaters, High Emmerock (though perhaps it's more accurate to say that the Water Witch Scsilda, who dwells there, is one of his favorites).

One of the more prosperous realms in the Border Kingdoms, High Emmerock is a region of high, grassy meadows suited for grazing livestock. It is unusually verdant, providing ample grazing, and as a result, teems with wild beasts.

History

Early on, giants moved in to rule and defend this gigantic "food pen" against goblins, orcs, and other predators. Under their husbandry, edible grazing animals grew even more numerous, until Calishite adventurers came exploring, some three centuries ago. The humans found wild horses of superb quality in the high meadows and set about exterminating giants.

From that time on, "the Sward" (as those first Calishite explorers called the meadows) has served certain Calishite horse dealers as a secret breeding area. Both to camouflage their best stock and to use every inch of grazing land, the breeders hunted down as many predators as they could, and put in their place horned cattle, sheep, and goats. These flourished, and their increasing numbers led to a proliferation of rustlers, monsters, and mercenary guards hired to deal with both sorts of raiders.

The loyalty of such hirelings in turn became a problem. After several minor defiances, there came outright rebellion: the leader of the Unsleeping Eye Guardians, the warrior Ithkyl Halgart, decided to declare the Sward his own kingdom.

An experienced and prepared warrior, Halgart won a series of bitter battles with forces sent by Calishite satraps who disagreed with the notion of paying for beasts they considered their own. The armies came in earnest for three seasons, and were followed by sporadic expeditions of hired mages and renowned adventuring bands in the decade that followed—but Halgart prevailed.

His end came after seventeen years of ruling his realm from a cave stronghold (today a monster-haunted labyrinth of natural caverns known as "the Ghostways"), when a rapacious blue dragon descended to dine on the Sward's best horseflesh.

The Lord of the Sward rode out to do battle with it, and was torn apart for his troubles. However, the wyrm died under volleys of fire arrows, at the hands of Halgart's men, and was cooked and eaten at the Lord's funeral feast.

After the Lord's death, the watching Calishites expected the fledgling realm to fall apart in the inevitable struggle for the throne among Halgart's underlings—but a warrior named Maeradyn took power swiftly and ruthlessly, and the Sward survived.

Then the Calishites watched and waited for the new Lord's rule to fail. When it did not, they sent more hired armies to smash his troops. But the fast-riding Swardar fired arrows, struck swiftly, and raced on before the larger, better-equipped Calishite

forces could strike camp and respond.

Whenever the Swardar were brought to bay, giants appeared out of thin air, as if by magic, to pounce on the Calishite forces. The satraps soon grew tired of throwing away money on armed hosts whose few survivors brought back only news of futility, and abandoned their efforts to reconquer the Sward.

After the Siege

Over the years that followed, a succession of fiercely independent local rulers kept the realm strong, by selling their famous horses and lesser livestock to build, equip, and train an elite force of mounted crossbowmen and lancers to guard the herds and horse-meadows.

Priests of Helm were encouraged to settle in the realm and guard its borders—as were adventurers who wanted a safe haven to dwell in, and who agreed to submit to the worship and instruction of the Helmite clergy. The famous Company of Sun Knights adventuring band did so, retiring to the Sward at the end of a long and colorful career to found the now equally famous Sunbright Lances of the realm.

The Lances are heavily armored men of great height and strength. A massed charge of such knights can smash aside and trample most foes, and their almost fanatical commanders train the Lances to fight in swamps, rainstorms, thick forest, blizzards, and mud, mounted and on foot. They become adept at shedding armor while in battle or on the move if need be, and in anticipating enemy tricks.

After a century of such training and victory after victory in battle against various ambitious neighbors, the Lances are widely feared in the Border realms—and very few dare to trifle with the laws and peace of High Emmerock.

The present name of the realm comes from one of its most famous kings: Emmerock the Goblinbane, who hunted orcs, goblins, and their kin as some men hunt stags in the forest, until the enraged goblins mustered an army from their usually-feuding tribes (who dwelt in the land that today is Thuntar) and invaded the Sward—chasing Swardar patrols who fled into the deep ravine at the heart of the realm... into a waiting goblin trap.

There, with the Lake in the Cleft glimmering before them, the goblins died in the thousands, slaughtered from on all sides by the rolled rocks, hurled lances, and fired arrows of the Swardar.

The goblin army was eradicated, and the next day the Swardar charged down into the goblin lands to the southwest. Goblin warrens were surrounded, haycarts set ablaze and pushed into the tunnels, and the goblins were smoked out—to their deaths in the face of withering arrow volleys. When all of the goblinkin had been hunted down, the King declared that the Sward would henceforth be known as High Emmerock, and the goblin lands as Low Emmerock.

Emmerock then sired three sons, all equallly as hard-driving and ambitious. One murdered him for the crown and was executed by his shocked younger brothers, who promptly went to war with each other for the realm. The son known as Esbolder prevailed, naming himself King and banishing his younger brother, Nothlan, to everlasting exile.

Nothlan went straight to Calimshan, and offered horse-breeding families there a chance to own part of the fabled Land of Horses again if they backed him in a bid to regain his "rightful" throne. They did.

Nothlan's forces landed in Low Emmerock to find the Emmeran armies waiting for them. The struggle that followed ravaged both armies until a harsh winter forced the survivors to stop fighting and scratch to survive.

Whatever Nothlan's true fate, spring found his army reduced to handfuls of scattered, fleeing warriors, and Low Emmerock a lawless, ravaged land. The surviving warriors of High Emmerock were unable to hold it; all their attention was needed to defend the original meadowland realm against wave after wave of opportunistic invaders.

It was then that the Company of Sun Knights, landholders in the realm for more than a decade, who had been off adventuring, came home to stay. Under their competent leadership, High Emmerock survived, but its forces were never able to retake more than small regions of their former sister realm (which is today the land of Thuntar), for days or months at a time.

When the line of kings died away (the last King of Emmerock, Belder the Sly, perished in 1344 of a bloating plague while visiting the port cities of the Lake of Steam), High Emmerock slid peacefully into the rule of a council of seven warrior Lords (the descendants of the Sun Knights). Their policies ensured that the Emmerans would stop trying to regain Low Emmerock, and instead concentrate on improving their homeland.

They succeeded. Today, High Emmerock is a well-ordered, heavily-policed land that resembles a huge farm in which stock is reared, woodlands are carefully irrigated and trimmed, and patrols are frequent and vigilant. The towers of the Lords of the Lances ring the land, and its interior consists of rolling open grasslands, still known as "the Sward." ❑

Ah, yes, the Border Kingdoms. I was born there in a little cottage built into the shoulder of a flower-girt hill in High Emmerock. I destroyed the place with my first fireball spell.

—Jalankhan Harmister
Archmage of Lyrabar
in a talk at an Inner Sea Conclave
Year of the Prince

Sometime during the dark, chilly depths of that cold season, Nothlan vanished. Some say he was murdered by his brother (or an adventuring band hired by the king), others that he froze to death and was devoured by wolves before his body could be found. Still other folk whisper that he blundered through a magical gate to "another place," never to return. Minstrels sing of the day that a son of Nothlan, "the rightful king of all Emmerock," will come to regain the realm. There are also those who say he simply sickened of the whole affair and went away to take up a life of devotion to a peaceful god, or study at Candlekeep.

Next month: The seven Lords , the Water Witch, and points of interest.

BEING PC

Tips on Character Portrayal in Network Tournaments

by Robert Wiese

During my tenure as Tournament Coordinator, I've observed a phenomenon which has gone a long way towards confusing what role-playing really is.

I have heard people classify encounters as combat, puzzle, obstacle, and role-playing. The people talking assume a role-playing encounter is one in which some interaction happens. Role-playing is much more.

Role-playing, by definition, must be the process of portraying a role. This involves more than a character's interactions with other characters; role-playing involves assuming the personality of the character, becoming him and doing things as he would do them. I have been privileged to play with one or two amazing players who assumed the personality given to them and successfully portrayed it throughout the game. Most of us, however, keep our role-playing to one type of encounter and act like ourselves during other types of encounters.

Role-playing in Negotiation

According to the paradigm prevalent among some players, the non-hostile encounter in which the character interacts verbally with other characters, is the role-playing outlet. This encounter is where the character expresses attitudes and quirks, gets information from NPCs, and so on.

Since many judges feel that social situations should be "role-played out," if the character has exceptional social skills, so must the player. This always defeats me in tournaments, because I am introverted. You may have similar problems. A good DM might allow you to take this into account by stating your objectives, making an effort, and then making a Charisma or related attribute check. If you don't have this option, then your only hope is to add a little to the character. Develop a cough, go into mourning for a fictional relative, allows some situation to make you touchy so that you can become angry later on. By giving yourself either a reason for not shining socially or a stronger emotion to invoke when necessary, you can save yourself from the failure you might feel in not being able to portray the character's social graces.

Role-playing in Combat

When the adventure shifts to combat, players generally view the character as a set of stats, and use their own methodology. However, combat is a great role-playing situation as well. A character will behave according to his own nature no matter what he is doing. So when he fights, he will fight his own way. Bring out the character's personality even if the whole adventure is one fight after another.

Look at the weapon skills and fighting combinations listed on the character sheet, and then check the equipment list to see what the character actually has. Sometimes a character may have skill in six or more weapons, but only carry one. That says something about how the character likes to fight. Take a look at the character's protection items and armor class (or equivalent). If he is walking around in full plate and carrying a two-handed sword, he has a different fighting style that he would if he wore light leather and carried a rapier. The choice of weapons and armor may also indicate the character's confidence level or attitude towards fighting. Play these whenever fight occurs.

Role-playing in Problem-Solving Situations

This category of encounter covers a wide range of possibilities, from puzzles to crossing chasms to escaping from prison. Here again, many players automatically revert to their own method-

ology and miss a chance to show the character's personality and way of doing things.

Examine the character's intelligence, wisdom, wits, or equivalent mental attributes. These tell you how creative and brilliant the character is. If the ratings are average, then she will probably come up with average or obvious solutions, while brilliance may result in a clever and devious solution. Wisdom or its equivalent rates how well the character learns from experience, so a low Wisdom may indicate that the character has to go through the same situation three or four times before learning a lesson. These types of characters may rely on previous solutions and not be able to modify them to fit a slightly different situation, or have to re-solve the problem a couple of times.

Another clue to the character's mental makeup is given in skills. If he leans toward combat skills, he is likely to consider situations as tactical scenarios to be outmaneuvered. If he leans toward languages, he may consider the same situations from the position of getting the pieces to cooperate or align. A leaning toward wilderness skills may produce an outlook geared toward overcoming or persevering through gradual means.

This is the second hardest aspect of role-playing, because the character's mental attributes do not always match the player's. One trick which might help is to pick a familiar television or movie character whose mental attributes and methodology match the character's. It may be easier to make the jump from your personality to the character's if you have a middle ground you can visualize. Archetypal characters are especially helpful: the Bertie Wooster type, the Hercules type, the Batman type, the Han Solo type, the "James Bond woman" type, the Fred Flintstone type, and others.

Role-playing Extreme Physical Stress

Situations of extreme stress include torture, days of walking or other exertion without sleeping, and even dangling over a precipice. These are the hardest role-playing challenges, because the character is experiencing something that the player cannot really imagine properly. For example, a woman who walks for days without sleep might drop her infant children along the way, leaving them behind. She would not do so normally, but the strain of her ordeal dulled her mental acuity. This character's player would be sitting around a table in comfort, and therefore at full (or close) mental capacity, and would not be likely to make the decision to leave the children behind.

Constitution is a good guide for how well the character responds in these situations. When you judge that the character's mental acuity is suspect, you must make some bad decisions if you want to role-play well. These bad decisions need to be according to character's nature and knowledge base; making bad tactical decisions when playing a character who isn't good at fighting anyway does not simulate the situation well. If the judge uses a lot of proficiency checks, assign yourself penalties to reflect the character's condition. Going a little crazy can help the portrayal too.

Conclusion

You can have a lot of fun playing Network events by seeing your character as more than a collection of stats and spells. You don't need a silver tongue, or great interpersonal skills to bring out the personality of a character. A person shows his character in everything she does, and this principle works to successfully play any character you receive in a tournament.

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TOURNAMENT ADVENTURES: HOW TO WRITE 'EM..

Writing an RPGA tournament is different than making up an adventure for your home campaign, since you have to squeeze an entire adventure into three or four hours *and* write the characters.

In this article, we'll walk through the nuts and bolts of writing a tournament, with all the major steps from start to finish. I'll also tell you common mistakes people make when they write their first tournaments.

Step 1: I'M WRITING WHAT?

Start with a simple idea, or "plot hook." This is your adventure theme, from as broad as "warlock's curse destroying kingdom" to as detailed as "PCs are courting each other, and must deal with vindictive succubus."

Then figure out your general plot. This usually isn't hard, as most gamers have overstock in the imagination department, but expect the idea to change as you go along. Your adventure needs interesting personalities (including NPCs to talk to), some drama or excitement, and should end up being fun to play. If the idea doesn't excite you after you turn it around your head for a while, it probably won't make a great module, so think of a way to make it better. At this stage, don't think "Oh, I must have two role-playing encounters, two combat encounters and a puzzle." Instead, think of that plot hook that excites you, and then flesh out what would happen during the course of an adventure. I often start with a villain, someone really odd or nasty that would make players think twice, and then come up with a devious plan that the PCs have to stop. Once you have a general plot idea, make sure you write it down in as much detail as you need to remember it.

Estimate how hard you think the event is going to be, so you can guess at the level of the characters. Obviously, if they're going to fight a shambling mound, they need a lot more power than if they just fight hobgoblins. Don't want to make it impossible for characters to survive, but there's nothing wrong with expecting them to fight for their lives.

So how much time should you set aside to write an adventure? Well, writing a module isn't the sort of thing you do over a weekend. There are a few authors who can bang out a beautiful piece of work in two days, but they're few and far between. Actual writing time is usually about 8 to 14 hours, but most of us require weeks of thinking, rethinking, procrastinating, and development before we come out with something we're proud of. Then you need to give it to someone else to playtest and edit, and there's another four hours of revision afterwards. It's worth it, though, when you watch players trying to cope with your devious plans.

Step 2: DESIGNING A GREAT ADVENTURE

At this point, rough out the PCs' personalities. Unless you're writing a module for a LIVING™ campaign, where players bring their own characters, you'll need to write six pregenerated characters. It's far better to get a feel for them earlier instead of later. You need to think about class, race, level, personality, and interactions between PCs.

I'll tell you a secret: for good RPGA games: the PCs are much more important than the adventure itself. Sounds strange, but it's true. Don't think you can bang the PCs off in a few hours. A mediocre adventure with great PCs can be a great game, but a great adventure with mediocre PCs won't be. Spend time thinking about it, and then jot down notes about each of the six PCs. Don't worry about saving throws and THAC0s yet! Just get down the basics, like who dislikes who in the party, what the mage's terrible past is, why the elf is terrified of commitment, and so forth.

Once you've got the basics written, write a fast version of each PC, including ability scores, unique items, background and personality, character interactions, and any role playing tips for the player. You'll be referring to these a lot as you write encounters, so its worth the time to do them now.

Next, plot out each encounter in detail. This is where you figure out what happens in what order. A little work here guarantees that you won't have a completely linear adventure (a common flaw), and will give you a great understanding of how the game will flow and how long it will take. Planning to ambush PCs with a bevy of kobolds? Put it down. Have a strange old desert wanderer who is forever looking for the ocean, and won't tell the group what they need to know until they sing sea shanties with him? Put it down. Same for that clever puzzle you made for your own game, or the riddle you thought up and want to use. This is also where you design encounters that make the PCs actively choose between two or more paths, making the adventure less linear.

Unless you are specifically writing a humorous event, avoid the "cutesy" syndrome. Taking a potentially frightening monster and giving it a goofy name and personality seldom works well. The same theory applies to magical items. A hellhound toy poodle or a lich named "Whizzo" with bunny slippers of spider climbing might be briefly funny, but seldom enhances the game. Likewise, make encounters logical. Everything has an ecology; placing a tribe of troglodytes and a tribe of bugbears in the same dungeon with no food source or water supply won't endear you to players.

Try not to have more than three combat encounters during the adventure. When you plan combat encounters, it is usually a good idea to occasionally allow the players some possibility of avoiding combat. It doesn't have to be obvious, but some way of dealing with the event besides violence will be appreciated. You should also remember that lots of combat, especially mass combat with dozens of monsters, is rarely appreciated by either players or DM. Many people forget that a big combat can take an hour to play out, really eating into a 3-hour playing session! As a general rule, it's better to put in three or four tougher monsters than 10 or more medium strength monsters.

A game should be heavier on role-playing, with interesting NPCs to talk to and interact with, than it is on combat. Not all NPCs have to be friendly! This might mean placing talkative mimics and lonely orcish guards into a dungeon adventure, but a straight hack & slash dungeon crawl should be avoided at all costs. One or two puzzles per game also breaks up a pattern, so long as they fit smoothly into the storyline. Nothing seems more out of place than a random, irrational puzzle.

A very effective trick is to tailor encounters to specific character traits. If you have a ranger who hates giants

because they killed her family, placing a good giant who can help the party allows for excellent role-playing. Will she swallow her hatred or give in to it? You don't know, but it will be fun to find out! (This is why you finished roughing out the PCs before you started work on the encounters.)

Now, step back, take a day off, and read over your plot, your encounters and your PC descriptions. Does the plot still make sense? Do you need to add details to your PCs? Do the players have free choice, or are they shuttled from one encounter to another? Make changes, and get ready to type!

Step 3: WRITING THE DARN THING

This is where many people fail, because they don't realize that starting typing can be the hardest part. It's true, many people have the most difficulty in setting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). For these people, the hardest part isn't coming up with a great plot, it's writing the ideas down, because they panic about writing and never finish, or procrastinate for weeks. The best way around this is simply to write anything, and worry about editing it later. If you find yourself procrastinating, try setting aside a specific block of time in your day to work on the module. Once you break through the fear that you aren't going to do it properly, you'll be quite pleased with the results.

As you begin writing, start with a Player's Introduction and a DM's Summary. The Player's Introduction is typically read to the players verbatim. Try to keep it short. The DM's Summary should give a brief description of the plot and pertinent encounters, so the DM can tell with a glance how the plot should run. This section can also contain secret background information that the DM knows and the players don't.

At this point, many authors write the introduction, all the encounters, and the conclusion without putting any monster and NPC statistics in yet. Putting in statistics (such as AC, THAC0, hit points, and damage) on the fly isn't easy if you have to stifle your creativity every fifteen minutes to look up monsters in a reference book. Writing the entire adventure and then going back and placing the pertinent stats is often faster. If you are writing a LIVING module, you will often need to supply tiered monster and NPC stats to accommodate the potential difference in party levels. Ask HQ for help with tiering if you try a LIVING module.

One of the pitfalls to watch out for is the misuse of boxed text. Boxed text is often read directly to the players by the game master, and the players can't act until the boxed text has been read. Although most players prefer to have the DM describe things in her own words, reading boxed text can be fine if it is just descriptive ("The room is covered in dust and cobwebs It looks like no one has been here for months."). Never, never write boxed text that assumes character actions ("You stand in horror, unmoving as the ogre slams his axe down into the Duke") or which allows a villain to escape with no chance of the party stopping it.

One big difference between tournament modules and a home campaign is that treasure isn't as important in a tournament, unless it has a specific use later in the adventure. There is no need to place treasure like a Manual of Health or 40,000 GP if you know the characters won't have time to read or spend their loot during the adventure. This changes if you are writing LIVING CITY! In any of the LIVING campaigns, players will keep magic items found on defeated NPCs and monsters, so proper balance of magic and treasure is essential.

When you actually write the detailed PC sheets, you'll write both character background and party interactions (what this PC thinks of his companions) for each PC. I'll cover player characters in detail next month, but mind two cardinal rules: give the character a personality, not just a history, and make sure written interactions are consistent. If the elf and humans think the gnome smells odd, the gnome's background should mention his wonderful new cologne.

Step 4: FINISHING YOUR MASTERPIECE

Once you have encounters written and characters completed, wait a few days and reread the module. Look for spelling mistakes and logical inconsistencies. Are there any last minute changes you can make to accommodate a PC quirk (like noting that a barmaid will fall in love with the elf who is afraid of commitment)? Are your puzzles solvable? Does an unsolved puzzle or avoided encounter disrupt the adventure? Is the final encounter dramatic? Make any necessary changes.

Then reread the PCs, looking for spelling mistakes, rules contradictions (typos in combat stats are common), and any problems with backgrounds and interactions.

Once you have everything perfect, try to arrange for a play test, especially if this is your first adventure. The playtest should not be run by you, although you might sit quietly in a corner and take notes. This will help you discover if the adventure is too long, too short, or has some fatal flaw. I played one adventure that hadn't been play tested where a PC priest had the spell, *dimension folding*, which allowed the party to skip four encounters (half the adventure!).

After the playtest, talk to the players and DM to see what they liked and disliked, and what they would change. You might not agree, but it's worth hearing.

Make final changes, and submit your module to RPGA HQ, along with a paper copy, a 3.5" disk copy, and your RPGA number. If the module is written for a specific con, note that as well. The usual deadline is six months prior to the convention, so plan ahead to allow RPGA staff time to review and edit the tournament.

There's first-time tournament writing in a nutshell. Although my examples were for AD&D, there are a number of different game systems available for RPGA scenarios, including Call of Cthulhu, Ars Magica, Shadowrun, Paranoia, Earthdawn, Amber, Star Wars and others. The campaign worlds of LIVING CITY™, LIVING JUNGLE™, Virtual Seattle, and LIVING DEATH™ are also popular at cons. Start writing for the network and you'll find it's addictive, fun, and you get paid for it.

Next month: Tournament Player Characters: How to write 'em so they don't stink.

...SO THEY GET ACCEPTED by Kevin Kulp

Creating the Nightmare

by Gary Labrecque

Have you ever thought about writing a horror tournament? Want to try your hand at Call of Cthulhu, Chill, or RAVENLOFT®? How about LIVING DEATH™? How about adding a little variety by including elements of horror in a single adventure for your home AD&D® campaign?

Horror is the second toughest genre to write. (Only comedy is more difficult.) Writing a scary role-playing tournament is even tougher. Your job is to scare a group of players who are sitting around a table, slurping soda, and munching on junk food. Here are some practical tips for making your adventure a little scarier.

Main Adversary

One of the key elements in writing a scenario is selecting the proper adversary. Horror scenarios tend to have one major entity or a group of weaker ones as opponents for the PCs. Think about Dracula, The Wolfman, or any other classic horror movie; the adversary was so important that they named the film after it! Spend some time picking the one(s) that best fit your plot.

Remember that your adversary is a character, the same as any PC. Develop it into a real, multi-dimensional character with its own likes and dislikes. A convincing villain makes the rest of your scenario more believable and terrifying, and makes writing your tournament much easier. If you know the motives of your villain, you can figure out its mode of operation and its reactions when the PCs try to stop it.

Plot

Draw players into the tournament by building suspense as it progresses. In the beginning, tantalize them with hints of horrors to come. Use the adversary sparingly, letting it work behind the scenes. Avoid unnecessary combat, which breaks the tension. Gore should also be used sparingly to punctuate truly horrifying scenes. Tension and suspense should peak at the climax.

Though you want to minimize early encounters with the adversary, it can be effective to allow the PCs to meet it early in the tournament when they are unprepared. Instead of killing them, the villain toys with the PCs and tries to impress them with its power. This can be very effective with intelligent monsters, such as vampires. It enhances an adversary's mystique and the PCs' respect for it, but can get old fast if overdone.

Never let players feel as if they are in control. Use weather conditions—fog, thunderstorms, blizzards, etc.—for atmosphere and to limit PCs' mobility and visibility. Give them red herrings just to unnerve them and keep them guessing. Is that rapping a loose shutter or an unspeakable horror just outside their bedroom door? Players should feel as if, at any moment, their characters could be killed. Blow up PCs' cars, or sink their boats. Brutally murder NPCs standing next to PCs, even wound or maim PCs. However, try to let them survive until the climax.

While investigation is an important part of any horror scenario, avoid making it a detective story. There are several things you can do to remind players that they are playing a horror tournament. Kill someone they know. Increase the destruction the longer they take in their investigation. Murder some of their informants. Make (unsuccessful) attempts on PCs' lives. After all, intelligent monsters will realize that someone is tracking them and take appropriate steps to neutralize their pursuers.

Now, I am going to let you in on a nasty, but effective secret to truly unsettling horror: let the monsters cheat early in the scenario. You heard me right—let them cheat! Create conditions that hinder PCs but not the monsters. If it's foggy, let the monsters slip in and out of vision before players can act. Let the adversary escape death if it's too early, by finding that one unguarded window or flying away just before the explosion. On the other hand, monsters track the PCs no matter what they do.

Letting the monsters cheat is a powerful tool for creating fear and uncertainty. However, "cheating" should be used with caution, especially if you are a first-time author. Subtlety is extremely important, and everything MUST have a plausible explanation. Also, stop using this technique well before the climax, so the PCs have a fair chance of defeating the horror at the end.

Avoid encounters where PCs cannot succeed no matter what: the President is assassinated, a prisoner escapes, etc. I have seen too many tournaments fall apart because the players were smarter than expected and SHOULD have beaten the "no win" encounter. Unless you are certain that nobody will beat your "no win" encounter, do not use it.

The climax should be a dramatic, life and death struggle between the PCs and the adversary with the outcome far from certain—it need not be a combat encounter. Be sure to allow alternative solutions for creative players, and include notes for your judges. If you have done your job well, players will not care if their characters survive; many will enjoy having their character die spectacularly or go hopelessly insane. It

gives them a great story to tell their friends!

Remember that variety is the spice of life. Do not repeat what you did in your last three tournaments. Do not overuse dreams, gypsies, or other horror cliches. For a while, it seemed as if every third RAVENLOFT had a vampire, and every other Call of Cthulhu plot involved trying to stop an insane cultist from summoning some Great Old One. The last thing you want to be is predictable. Do something different by selecting rarely used monsters, coming up with a new plot, or choosing a new setting. Your judges and players will thank you.

Mechanics

While judges have the final task of making your work terrifying, they cannot do it without your help. Provide a judge's introduction with background, a plot summary, and a time table. Include notes throughout the tournament on how you want encounters run. Should the judge pause at certain spots just to make players nervous? Where should the judge speed up or slow the pace? Give them everything they need to run your tournament, but try not to overburden the judge with unnecessary information.

Pay particular attention to boxed text. Boxed text is anything read aloud to players, including the Players' Introduction, descriptions at the beginning of an encounter, and the tournament's conclusion. Boxed text saves time by summarizing preliminary information and allows you to skip to the action. Use it to establish atmosphere and set tone for the encounter. Make it come alive with active verbs and colorful descriptions.

At the same time, do not overdo boxed text. If it is too long (more than a couple of paragraphs), it becomes boring. You can lose believability if words are too flowery or overly dramatic. Do not take away opportunities to role-play: if the PCs meet an NPC, give them a chance to role-play introductions and small-talk before getting to the meat of the conversation. Keep it plausible, too. Do not tell them they can hear a whisper over a pneumatic drill.

Pattern the layout of your tournament after modules for the same system. Note the format of already-sanctioned tournaments. Look at scenarios from the company that puts out your game, and see how monster and NPC stats are given. Using a standard format will make your tournament easier for judges to follow.

Characters

Since role-playing is very important in horror RPGs, spend time developing the character personalities and interactions. Multi-dimensional characters are the most fun to play because they do not get boring after the first hour. But, they are the hardest to write. A common flaw in tournaments is to have four really good characters with two characters added as afterthoughts. Create six, equal characters and let the players go at it. Make sure each character has interactions with every other character. If the characters are fun to role-play, the players will have fun no matter what the plot is like.

Select six characters who fit your scenario well. Each should have a moment to shine during play; none should take center stage for extended periods of time. All should have skills useful someplace during the tournament. Emphasize investigative and communication skills—they are more important than combat skills in horror RPGs. Duplicate essential skills so the party will have a better chance at succeeding. Remember that in most horror systems, you are not creating heroes, but everyday people in a terrible situation; give them appropriate, realistic statistics.

Do not be afraid of party conflict. Let characters dislike each other—even hate each other. In a good horror tournament, events usually force characters who cannot stand to be in the same room with each other to work together. Of course, they will argue the entire time they are saving each others' bacon. A nice, happy party is BORING to play.

Feedback

Get someone else whose opinions you trust to read your work. They can provide fresh insight into the tournament. After you have worked on something long enough, you become blind to little errors. Are you really saying what you are trying to say? Is your intended point coming across? Remember that your work will be run by someone else.

Playtest your tournament. Get someone else to run it so you can see if everything runs as you intended. Look at how the group responds to your most terrifying scenes: Does everyone become interested in what's going on? Do players look nervous and uncertain, or do they laugh at supposedly horrifying scenes?

So what are you waiting for? Grab a pen and start jotting down your ideas. There is a whole network waiting to play your tournament.

❑

The last thing you want to be is predictable.

1997 NETWORK CLUBS DECATHLON COMPETITION

EVENTS TO GET YOUR CLUB'S BLOOD RACING

The Network Club Decathlon is held every year to encourage club unity and participation in Network activities.

This year, events favor those clubs which are involved in the Network at all levels, so think broadly.

As extra incentive, we've upped the prize amounts this year! The winning club receives the big trophy and a selection of new gaming products valued at over $300. Second place takes home a splendid trophy and new gaming products worth at least $200. The third place club wins a very nice trophy and gaming products worth at least $100. All clubs who can earn at least 10 points in the contest receive a nice consolation prize. All prizes will be awarded at the Awards Ceremony at WINTER FANTASY™ show, 1998.

To compete, your club can enter up to 10 events from the three categories of writing events, tournament play, and service events. Each category has its own limit. Further, your club MUST enter at least one service event to make it to the final tally.

WRITING EVENTS

These events test club members' creativity. Each club may enter up to five of these events, and can submit as many entries into a single event as it wishes, though the club only receives Decathlon points for one entry per event. Entries must include a printout and disk copy of the submission. The author's name and club name should appear at the top of each page. All entries must be accompanied by a completed Decathlon Entry Form AND a Standard Disclosure Form. In addition to these basic requirements, some events have special requirements which must also be met.

Club Newsletter

Deadline: September 30
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation: 1 point

Clubs must produce four newsletters within the period of January 1st to September 30th. Send a copy to Network HQ when it is printed, and send a collection of them all before the end of September. Entries will be judged on quality, content, and timeliness.

Villain Lair or Base

Deadline: March 31
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation: 1 point

Design a master villain's lair or base. Include a map of the layout, descriptions of the areas, details on any tricks or traps set to keep out the uninvited, and describe the type of master villain who would use this type of lair. The lair can be designed for any of the following game systems: the AD&D® (any setting or published world) or DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ games by TSR; Shadowrun or Earthdawn by FASA, Star Wars or World of Indiana Jones/D6 System by West End Games; Champions or Hero System by Hero Games; or Call of Cthulhu by Chaosium. Entries should be no longer than 3,000 words and include maps.

Sea Monster

Deadline: April 30
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation: 1 point

Design a new monster which dwells in the sea. The creature should contain complete statistics and can be designed for: the AD&D (any setting or published world) or DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE games by TSR; Shadowrun or Earthdawn by FASA; or Star Wars by West End Games. Format the entry using the standard creature formats for the game system chosen. All entries must completely describe the creature's combat abilities and tactics, appearance, ecology (what it eats), where it lives, how it associates with others of its species, and what treasure it is likely to acquire. Entries should be no longer than 2,000 words.

Technological Item

Deadline: May 31
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation:1 point

Design a new techno toy. Explain what it does, how it does it, who makes it, how they make it, and who can use it. Note any special skills or training required. The item must have complete game statistics. You may choose any of the following game systems: Marvel Superheroes by TSR; Star Wars or other D6 system games by West End Games; Chill by Mayfair; Champions or Hero System by Hero Games. A drawing of the device would be a nice extra. Entries should be no longer than 2,000 words.

Sidekick

Deadline: June 30
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation:1 point

Write up a sidekick character. This can be a villain's henchman or a hero's faithful (and bumbling) ally, but the character should be the type that exists to serve another. Examples include Tonto to the Lone Ranger, Arthur to the Tick, and even Robin to Batman. Provide complete stats and background, motivation, and personality. Explain why this person is a sidekick, and what kind of main character this guy would be a sidekick to. You need not provide the main character. Use any game system you want. Entries should be no longer than 2,000 words.

One Round Tournament

Deadline: September 15
First place: 5 points
Second place: 3 points
Participation: 1 point

Multi-Round Tournament

Deadline: October 31
First place: 6 points
Second place: 4 points
Participation: 2 points

Write a one-round or multi-round tournament in any of the following game systems: the AD&D, ALTERNITY™, or DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE games by TSR Shadowrun or Earthdawn by FASA Corp.; Star Wars or D6 System by West End Games; Call of Cthulhu by Chaosium; Rolemaster by ICE; Champions or Hero System by Hero Games; Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, or Changeling by White Wolf Games; or Chill by Mayfair Games. Each tournament round must include six or more well-developed encounters, necessary maps, and six complete player characters. All entries must adhere to the RPGA tournament ethics guidelines (printed on pg. 23 of this issue). LIVING™ setting tournaments will not be accepted in this category. Entries should be no longer than 30,000 words, including characters.

TOURNAMENT PLAY

These events test clubs on game playing ability. Each club may select up to four tournaments, only one of which may be a team competition event. A different member must play in each individual competition, though those members could also play a team event. To enter this category, complete the form at the end of this article indicating the club name, what tournament was played, and who played. Entry forms must be received by the deadline date posted for the convention. At the tournament, the club representative must write "1997 Decathlon" on the top of his Player Summary sheet.

Several clubs can receive points from the same tournament. Available tournaments and locations are listed below.

SERVICE EVENTS

These events challenge clubs to work together for the betterment of the Network and the community. Clubs must enter one of these events, and may enter as many as they like.

Points for Service Events:

First place: 6 points
Second place: 4 points
Participation: 2 points

Most Demos Run by Club Members

Event Period: January 1 to November 30
Entry: Submit event entry form and club roster in January.
Submit summary list of demos and club roster between November 15 and November 30.

Game demos in retail stores, libraries, and schools promote social interaction and introduce new people to the hobby. Each demo run by club members within the parameters of the Network's demo program will count for the club in this event. Demo reports will be used to determine completed demos, and must be submitted within two weeks of the demo. A list of all club demos run during the event period must be submitted between November 15 and November 30, along with a complete club roster.

Most Tournament Rounds Judged

Event Period: Jan. 1st to Nov. 30
Entry: Submit event entry form and club roster in January.
Submit summary list of rounds judged and club roster between Nov 15 and Nov 30.

All rounds of Network events judged by club members during the event period will qualify. Members must write the club name on the upper left corner of the scoring grid. A summary of all rounds judged, organized by club member, must be submitted with a club roster between November 15 and November 30, for verification of total results.

Most Service to the Network

Event Period: January 1 to November 30
Entry: Submit event entry form and club roster in January.
Submit summary list of service incidents and club roster between November 15 and November 31.

Clubs will be evaluated on how much service their members give to the Network during the event period, as measured by Service Points awarded. Each type of service has a standard service point award. Service areas include working for HQ at the GEN CON® and WINTER FANTASY conventions, coordinating Network events at local conventions, volunteering at HQ, writing tournaments, and countless others. To be considered, these incidents of service must be submitted to Network HQ with a Decathlon Entry Form. In addition, clubs must submit a summary of their members' service incidents by November 30.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN TOURNAMENT PLAY POINTS

Points for Tournament Play

Individual	Team
1st place: 4 points	1st place: 5 points
2nd place: 2 points	2nd place: 3 points
Participation: 1 point	Participate: 1 point

Individual Competition

Convention	Month	Location	Tournament Name	Deadline
Sunquest	Jan	Orlando, FL	AD&D® "Monster in the Closet"	Dec 15
Round Con	Jan	Columbia, SC	Star Wars "Decisions"	Jan 1
WINTER FANTASY™ show	Feb	Milwaukee, WI	AD&D Ravenloft Special	Jan 1
Orccon	Feb	Los Angeles, CA	AD&D "Tonal Chaos"	Jan 1
Concentric	Mar	Chicago, IL	LIVING DEATH™	Feb 1
ConnCon	Mar	Danbury, CT	Call of Cthulhu game	Feb 15
Weekend/Ravens Bluff 3	Apr	All venues	LIVING CITY™ war module	Mar 1
Ben Con	May	Denver, CO	TBA	Apr 15
Games Caucus	May	Oakland, CA	TBA	Apr 15
Dragon*Con	June	Atlanta, GA	TBA	May 15
Darkcon	July	Oklahoma City, OK	TBA	Jun 15
DexCon	July	Somerset, NJ	TBA	Jun 1
Origins	July	Columbus, OH	TBA	Jun 15
GEN CON® Game Fair	Aug	Milwaukee, WI	AD&D Benefit	July 1
AndCon	Sep	Toledo, OH	TBA	Aug 15
European GEN CON	Sep	England	TBA	Aug 1
Shorecon	Sep	Ashbury Park, NJ	TBA	Aug 15
U-Conn	Oct	Ann Arbor, MI	TBA	Sep 1
ShaunCon	Nov	Kansas City, MO	TBA	Oct 15

Team Competition

Convention	Month	Location	Tournament Name	Deadline
ConnCon	March	Danbury, CT	AD&D Team	Feb 15
Ben Con	May	Denver, CO	AD&D Team	April 15
Dragon*Con	June	Atlanta, GA	AD&D Team	May 15
GEN CON Game Fair	Aug	Milwaukee, WI	Network Clubs	July 1

1997 NETWORK CLUBS DECATHLON COMPETITION

EVENTS TO GET YOUR CLUB'S BLOOD RACING

Most Money Raised for National Charity

Event Period: January 1 to November 30.

Entry: Submit event entry form in January.

Submit summary list of donations between November 15 and November 31.

Supporting charities through gaming events is one of the best things we can do as a Network. For this event, we have selected Make-A-Wish Foundation of America as our National Charity. Clubs will be judged on the total dollars they raise through game events, auctions, and other creative (but legal) means. Money need not be raised at conventions; use your imagination. Entries in this event must include a copy of the cancelled check from the charity and a detailed statement of how the money was raised. The following things will not be considered for this event: auction of LIVING setting items, members playing in Benefit events not sponsored by the club, and personal donations. Clubs must submit a summary of all monies donated by November 30.

Best Paperwork by a Club-Sponsored Convention

Event Period: Jan.1 to Nov. 30

Entry: Submit event entry form at least four weeks before the convention date.

Clubs which sponsor conventions can enter this category, which involves getting the Network scoring packs as close to perfect as possible. The convention must have a minimum of 20 scoring packs completed for events listed on a Tournament Request Form that was submitted on time and with proper payment. In addition, the packs must be received at Network HQ within six weeks of the date of the convention. Packs will be graded on neatness and accuracy. Points will be awarded based on the ratio of accurate packs to the total number of packs submitted. To enter this event, the club must submit a Decathlon Entry Form listing the convention it is sponsoring at least four weeks before the date of the convention. Submission with the Tournament Request Form is preferable.

Remember, each writing entry must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form and a SASE if you want a reply!

HERE IT IS! THE FORM YOU MUST FILL OUT FOR EVERY DECATHLON ENTRY!

YOU'VE GOT OUR PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY IT. GO AHEAD. NOBODY'S LOOKING.

1997 NETWORK CLUB DECATHLON ENTRY FORM

Club Name: _____

Name of Author/Representative: _____

Decathlon Event: _____

Title of Submission (if applicable): _____

Entry Category: **Tournament Play** **Writing Event** **Service Event**

A copy of this form must be completed and submitted with any required materials before the deadline date listed in the Event Schedule. Each entry must have its own form. You may include as many forms as you like in the same envelope. If you enclose an addressed and stamped postcard with each entry, we will confirm receipt.

Tournament Play: If an emergency requires you to change the player representative at a convention after you have submitted this form, see a Network HQ staffer or designated HQ representative and make the change BEFORE the event begins. Oversleeping, advancement in another event, and similar occurrences are not emergencies. Medical problems, being called to judge, and similar incidents are emergencies.

Send to: **Games Decathlon, RPGA Network, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147**

On the next few pages, we present the works of some of the winners from the 1996 Network Decathlon. On the next three pages is a LIVING DEATH™ adventure site. Following are new LIVING JUNGLE™ spells. Feel free to adopt, adapt, or abduct this information for your own games, or as springboards for future Network submissions.

The Obelisks of Tuthmosis III

or The Monuments More Commonly Known as Cleopatra's Needles

by Ramon Delgado

Egyptian obelisks have long been a symbol of the history, glory, and mystery of that legendary realm of the ancients.

These pillars of granite, quartzite, and basalt were intended to stand forever as a lasting tribute to the gods and kings of their creators. These obelisks saw the fall of the Egyptian, Roman and numerous other empires. Then, having survived for millennia in the barren and forgotten deserts of North Africa, they fell prey to the greed, ego, and curiosity of civilized man.

In the early nineteenth century, when Napoleon was conquering the vast majority of Europe and North Africa, the ancient lands of the Nile were once more brought into the limelight. A stone tablet, named the Rosetta Stone, was discovered by a French soldier and provided a key for deciphering the Egyptian alphabet and language. Armed with this newfound knowledge, scholars, scientists, archaeologists, and adventurers gathered at the sites of the ancients' greatest ruins and monuments. With them came the elite of European society; nobles, diplomats, businessmen, and military figures descended on the land of the Nile. Armed with words like "knowledge, study, and enlightenment" they poured over the oldest of earth's civilizations and ripped it open like a gigantic strip mine. They hauled away numerous treasures and relics, scattering them to the four corners of the modern world. Little did these people know what else they scattered, and how a desire to link themselves to the lands of the past, tainted their future with its curse.

The Obelisks

Tuthmosis III, who ruled Egypt during the Third Dynasty, has long been proclaimed the greatest of the Pharaohs. At the height of his power he endeavored to create a lasting reign which would better his land and people. Part of that goal included turning the capitol city of Heliopolis (City of the Sun) and its sister city, Thebes, into monuments to his reign and house. Included among the great many works were seven of the largest, most creative, and best known obelisks.

The first two were erected in Heliopolis, set side by side at the portal of the Sun Temple. The remaining five were set in a ring around the central court of Karnak, a temple in Thebes. It is hardly surprising, though quite ironic, that the great skill incorporated to create these works of art were the primary reason that no one of the seven is to be found in Egypt. They were moved and removed throughout the centuries, and three were lost some time in the dim past. The remaining four reside in Constantinople, Rome, London and New York, forming a line reaching from the old world to the new. Along that line flows a taint of the Red Death.

Tuthmosis' assistant in the manufacture of these stones was a high priest of Amun named Mennkheperresonb who is suspected of practicing sorcery. The source of his knowledge, whether in league with the Red Death, a member of an ancient cult, or leader of a forgotten Qabal, is a subject of controversy. But the fact remains that the obelisks created under his instruction are magnets for unexplained phenomena.

General Properties

Each pillar possesses unique properties as well as sharing some similar powers. On nights of the new moon, men and women have disappeared after pressing a sequence of carvings and reciting incantations. Sometimes the person is reported to appear at the site of another stone moments later. Other times, the few who returned reported battling savage undead menaces, surving with only their lives, haunted by the experience. Still other times, nothing at all seems to happen.

Rome

The Lateran Obelisk, named for its last resting place, was originally set in the temple of Karnak in Thebes. As with the other surviving pillars, its removal from the land of its creation was filled with mysterious delays and unusual events. Emperor Augustus first ordered its removal to Rome, but died before his wish could be fulfilled. It was forgotten for twenty years until the Emperor Constantius removed it, causing considerable damage to the temple. In Rome, the obelisk was set in the Circus Maximus and crowned with a golden orb. Lightning melted the crown, though the pillar was untouched. During the dark ages, it mysteriously fell over and was again forgotten. Finally, in 1588, the obelisk was rediscovered in the marshy remains of the Circus and erected in its present location—the Piazza San Giovanni.

The Lateran Obelisk is 104′ 6″ tall and weights 455 tons, easily the largest surviving obelisk in the world. It, like the other stones, is crafted of red granite, and adorned with hieroglyphics on all sides. The pyramid on top, once sheaved in gold, bears the likeness of Tuthmosis making an offering to Amun-Atum, an Egyptian deity who was reportedly the ancestor of Ra.

Reputed Properties:

• Spells cast within 50′ of this stone sometimes seem to inexplicably go awry or fail.

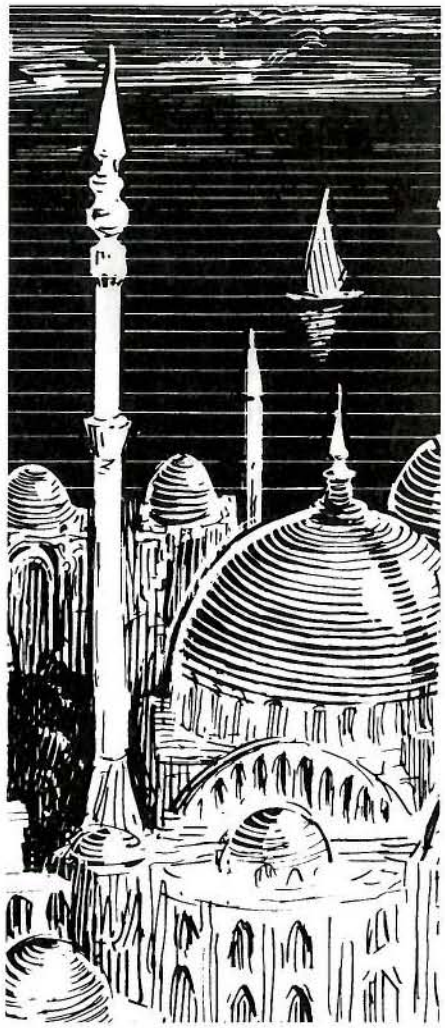
• Adept spell casting seems to happen more quickly in proximity of the Lateran Obelisk. It is said that Alteration, Abjuration, and Illusion spells are more effective when certain symbols on the obleisk are touched.

• The Lateran Obelisk is the home of a grave elemental formed from the nameless graves of those slain in the Circus Maximus.

• Those who slay the creature are said to be visited by walking dead men from the Circus Maximus on the anniversary of the grave elemental's destruction for the rest of their lives.

Constantinople

The Hippodrome Obelisk, or the pillar of the "House of Squares", as it is commonly called, is also from the temple of Karnak. Unlike its sister stone, the Hippodrome Obelisk did not suffer the varying fortunes and adversity of constant movement. It was removed from Egypt at the same time as the Lateran



Obelisk, but was delivered to its present destination within several months. Although it has never moved from this site, the Hippodrome Obelisk is missing about a third of its lower portion. How or when this happened is a mystery. All accounts describe an intact stone enroute to the Hippodrome and an artist's period peace clearly depicts a complete obelisk at the site.

The obelisk is currently 64′ 4″ tall, though its original size was more than 100 feet. The sides are decorated with hieroglyphics, on top rests a deformed pyramid, made of four sides with different widths. The scenes of a god granting the Pharaoh a symbol of life are depicted on each side.

Reputed Properties:

• Spells cast within several hundred feet of this stone are unpredictable, and readily fail.

• Mystic spells seem to occur more quickly and more powerfully than casters normally expect, although reports disagree on this matter.

• The Hippodrome Obelisk is alleged to house the spirit of Mennkheperresonb, a Mummy, and builder of the obelisks.

• One woman who defeated Mennkheperresonb gained mysterious, awful scars on her face. Egyptian natives shunned and reviled her for reasons of which neither they nor she would speak.

New York

This obelisk was removed from the ruins of the Sun Temple in Heliopolis by order of the Khedive Ismail. Presented as a gift to the United States during the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, work to remove it did not begin until 1877, when the London obelisk reignited interest. Almost immediately problems began.

First an Italian consul laid claim to the land where the obelisk rested, which resulted in months of negotiation between American and Italian dignitaries. Finally, the issue was settled by an International Court.

When work began, it was discovered that the pillar was pinned in an elaborate brace and foundation, all buried under several hundred tons of sand. Once excavated, the obelisk was transported to the Red Sea for shipment to the US. To load the stone, the cargo ship was dry docked and openings cut into its hull. When the ship was set to sail, it proved impossible to locate a crew to make the journey. Months later, a group of men were enlisted in southern Italy and transported to the Red Sea.

After an uneventful journey, the stone arrived in America. Moving the cumbersome stone through New York's narrow streets to its pedestal in Central Park took 112 days.

The obelisk is 68′ 11″ high and weights 193 tons. Like its twin in London, the New York stone is carved with inscriptions from Tuthmosis' period. The pyramid atop each obelisks depicts sphinxes making offerings to the Sun god of Heliopolis.

Reputed Properties:

• No spells have been able to be cast in proximity to the New York Obelisk.

• Some claim that they have seen visions of the future on moonless nights if they touch certain markings.

• Anyone entering within 50' of the stone with an active spell is afflicted with a death-like malaise for several hours afterwards.

• The guardian of this pillar is a spectre who guards jealously against intruders.

London

Without a doubt, the London Obelisk is associated with the worst streak of bad luck. Originally, it was to leave Egypt for London in 1801 as part of the surrender conditions given by the British army to the defeated French at the Battle of Alexandria. It took 75 years to finally make the journey.

Work began immediately on a jetty to hoist and load the stone, but a freak storm washed it away and further efforts were abandoned. Other attempts were made over the years by both private and government agencies, but all failed to gain enough support, interest, or working capital.

Then, in 1871, General James E. Alexander took up the struggle to bring the obelisk to London. Five years later, in 1876, he was finally given leave by both governments to begin the project. Forced to purchase the land around the stone, Alexander dug a channel from it to the Nile. There he had it set into a specially crafted barge, later named the Cleopatra.

The trip from Egypt to England was plagued with difficulties. Intense heat delayed the towing vessel, the Olga, from setting sail. Then, massive storms injured several of the crew. Forced to sail back to port to set the injured ashore, more time was wasted in a futile search for replacements. In the Bay of Biscay, the vessel encountered another storm and lost the barge. A rescue crew sent out to recapture it disappeared into the storm, never to be seen again. The barge was discovered by a passing ship and towed to Ferral on the coast of Spain. Weeks later, it was returned to Alexander for an extravagant "salvage" fee. A replacement ship, the Anglia, was secured to finish towing the Cleopatra and the barge arrived in London on January 21st, 1878. A plaque was placed on its pedestal listing the seamen lost on the journey.

The London Obelisk is 67′ 6″ high, and weighs 187 tons. Otherwise it is identical to its sister stone in New York.

Reputed Properties:

• Perhaps worse than the at others, spells cast near the London Obelisk have often been known to backfire horrifically upon casters. This has proved to be especially dangerous for Conjuration and Summoning spells.

• Men and women associated with the sea have been driven mad by working or living within several blocks of the London Obelisk.

• This obelisk is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the seven men lost in the its transportation.

• Spiritualists have said that the ghosts can be dispelled if their names and the site of their death are spoken aloud while sprinkling seawater on the plaque.

Note: Three obelisks of Tuthmosis III were lost sometime in the past. This is not to say that they were destroyed, for no trace of them has ever been found. What powers, abilities, guardians, and curses they had is unknown. With the vast passage of time and the numerous conquerors Egypt has seen, it is quite likely that these obelisks are still intact somewhere. And, in this age of adventure and discovery, it is only a matter of time before these relics of the past are once more brought to light, for good or ill.

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VITAL NOTICE FOR LIVING CITY™ FANS

Read Robert's ruling on paladin holdings in the Notes From HQ on the back page!

Living Jungle™ Spells

Priest Spells

Grassdart
by Susan Threadgill
(Alteration)
Spell Level: 2
Sphere: Plant
Range: 0
Duration: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 1d6+1 blades of grass within 10 ft.
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 2
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes 1d6+1 blades of grass to become stiff and sharp. Taller varieties of grass, such as that found on savannah, may be hurled as javelins for 1d6 points of damage. Smaller grasses, such as those found in the forest, may be thrown as darts for 1d3 points of damage. The grassdarts may not be fired as arrows unless fletchings are added. If the blades are not plucked before the spell expires, then they do damage according to their size to any creatures which fall on them. The grassdarts remain stiff for one turn.

The spell requires suitable blades of grass.

Water Window
by Susan Threadgill
(Elemental Water)
Spell Level: 3
Sphere: Divination
Range: 10 feet
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: 5 x 5 ft. square
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to gain information from a quantity of water. Once the spell is cast, the water begins to show the images of objects and creatures which have been reflected in its surface over the past 24 hours. The cast may make specific requests such as, "show me the last man who passed by here," and the water will show the appropriate reflection. Should the request be impossible to fulfill, the water becomes opaque gray until another request is made or the spell expires.

Should the caster use the spell on flowing water, such as a river, the caster must keep up with the water in order to view the reflection. Otherwise, the flowing water shows images of what happened upstream (where the actual water was when the objects were reflected in it). If there was no light to produce a reflection, the water shows only darkness under the effect of this spell.

The spell requires a suitable body of water.

Lizard Limbs
by James W. Cameron
(Alteration/Necromancy)
Spell Level: 4
Sphere: Animal
Range: 0
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: The caster
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: None

Under the influence of this spell, the caster may shed one or two limbs at will, without suffering damage. Thus the caster may escape the grasp of a fallen tree or large creature by shedding an arm or leg to allow escape. The caster suffers any ill effects that accompany losing a limb, according to the chart below. Note that the head and torso are not considered limbs for the purposes of this spell.

Limb Lost	Effect
One leg	Walking movement rate cut in half
Two legs	Walking movement rate 0
One arm	Lack of coordination; -2 on Dexterity checks\
Two arms	No use of arms
Tail	Lack of balance; -2 to hit and to all proficiency checks which can be affected by balance
Wings	Loss of flight

Limbs begin to regrow one hour after they were lost, and take 24 hours to completely regrow; they are not usable during this period. If a lost limb is recovered within two rounds, it may be reattached in one round.

Wizard Spells

Quick Vine
by Dave Blum
(Conjuration)
Spell Level: 1
Range: 0
Duration: 5 rds./level
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a vine to quickly grow from the spell fetish. The vine is 1 inch thick, grows at a rate of 1 foot per level of the caster per second to a maximum length of 10 feet plus 10 feet per level of the caster, and can attach itself to any sturdy non-moving surface such as a stone wall, a tree, a sturdy hut, or a cliff face. It will support up to 100 lbs. per level of the caster and takes six points of slashing damage to sever. It grows in a straight line, and the caster can declare a length shorter than the maximum at the time of casting, but the caster has no control over the rate or direction of growth. The vine cannot be used to entangle a living being.

The material components are a 3-inch length of vine, which is consumed in the casting, and the spell fetish, which is not consumed.

Ancestral Spirit
by David W. Baker
(Invocation)
Spell Level: 3
Range: 0
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 turn
Saving Throw: Special

This spell allows Malatran wizards to call upon the spirits of their ancestors for assistance. In order for the spell to work, the caster must tell stories of the ancestor's deeds to an audience of at least three other beings of the same race as the caster. The exact nature of the casting varies from tribe to tribe; some have animated presentations around a smoky campfire while others tell impassioned orations by a pool of water. The success of the spell depends on how well the caster evokes emotions appropriate to the ancerstor's deeds in the audience.

Once the caster has finished speaking, the listeners must make a saving throw vs spell; if more than one listener

fails then the spirit has been impressed and responds. This check can be modified by –/+ 4, depending on the caster's storytelling ability. If the storyteller has a related non-weapon proficiency, a successful check allows a bonus to the saving throw, a failure means a penalty. The magnitude of the bonus or penalty is related to the degree of success or failure in the proficiency check. Only one proficiency check may be made to affect the saving throws of listeners.

If the spell is successful, a small native animal (no larger than a rabbit) approaches and follows the spell caster. It follows for up to one week without involving itself in the wizard's tribulations. While the animal accompanies the caster, a number of Hero Points are doubled in effect when used by the caster or an ally. One Hero Point may be affected for every three levels of the caster. When the maximum number of hero points have been affected, the ancestral spirit leaves. (A Hero Point is a reward for heroic actions in the LIVING JUNGLE campaign which allows the recipient to modify one dice roll by +2/d20 before the die is rolled or +1/d20 afterwards. Hero Points may be used only once.)

The caster may also ask the ancestral spirit for guidance. This effect is similar to the 2nd level priest spell *augury*, except that the answers are not limited to "yes" or "no." The DM is the final arbiter of how helpful the spirit can be in a given situation, but advice should be brief, cryptic, or general but applicable. For example, the spirit could give a hint to solve a puzzle, but should not give the method of solution.

The material component is an item significant to the ancestor's legacy. Depending on the tribe, the item could be a piece of clothing, jewelry, part of a carved object, or even a piece of preserved bone. The item serves as the spell fetish, and may be used to cast the spell up to five times before it is consumed.

Hippo Walk
by Dave Blum
(Alteration)
Spell Level: 3
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: One creature
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows an individual to travel underwater by walking along the bottom in the manner of hippos. The underwater movement rate is the same as land movement rate, and the recipient gains enough additional (temporary) weight to counter his own bouyancy and remain on the bottom. The limit of depth is 20 feet per level of the caster. If maximum depth is exceeded, the spell ends. The duration of the spell is equal to one round per point of Constution of the recipient, the period for which the recipient normally can hold his breath. The spell does not grant any ability to breathe underwater.

The material component is a hippo's tooth.

Vampiric Plants
by Bill Sheffield
(Necromancy)
Spell level: 4
Range: 10 yds./level
Duration: 1 rd./level
Area of Effect: 10 ft. rad. x 10 ft. column
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 4
Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell, known only to a few witch doctors in Malatra, causes the plants within the area of effect to drain hit points from any living beings which enter the area, including the spell caster. The energy drained causes rapid growth of the plant life in the area of effect; the amount of growth is proportional to the original size of the plants and the amount of energy drained. Generally, the plants double in size each time they absorb hit points equal to the caster's normal maximum amount of hit points.

Damage sustained varies by terrain type and the level of the caster, according to the chart below. This damage is sustained each round that the victims are within the area of effect; each round of damage allows a saving throw to reduce damage by half.

Terrain Type	Damage
Open grassland	1 hit point per caster level
Overgrowth or forest	1d3 hit points per caster level
Thick forest or jungle	1d4 hit points per caster level

The spell duration begins once a living being crosses into the area of effect, and so can be used as a trap or ward. Once the spell effect begins, it continues for the duration even if there are no beings within the area of effect.

This spell carries a terrible cost for the caster. For each caster level, the caster loses 1 hit point in casting the spell. This loss is doubled in overgrowth or forest, and quadrupled in thick forest or jungle. The loss is not permanent; the hit points are recovered once the spell duration expires.

Quicksand
by Glenn Smith
Spell level: 5
Range: 10 yards
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: 5 ft. cube per level
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5
Saving Throw: Special

This spell, a variation of the spell *transmute rock to mud*, turns a section of normal or rocky ground into deadly quicksand. It does not affect swampy or sandy areas. The spell can affect a 5 foot cube per level of the caster, and the 5-ft. cubes may be arranged as the caster desires provided they connect. For example, a 9th level wizard can create nine cubes, and they could be arranged so that there is a solid cube in the center for the wizard to stand upon. If this spell is cast on the ground beneath an opponent, that opponent receives a saving throw vs spells to avoid the quicksand area. The ground remains quicksand until a dispel magic removes the effect or a *transmute mud to rock* spell is cast upon the area.

The material component is a small pouch of dried sand from a quicksand pit.

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Formats and Other Pesky Details of Tournament Submission

by Robert Wiese

In this issue of POLYHEDRON® Newszine, we've presented several good tips and bits of advice on writing adventures for the Network. Once you've penned your masterpiece and have a complete tournament though, the process of submission begins. This process can be complicated if the right steps are not followed, so here is a walk-through of the process.

1 Format Properly

Certain things need to be done in certain ways to speed the review process along.

Electronic Files: Tournaments must be submitted both electronically and on paper. Electronic file formats must be readable by Microsoft Word 6.0, so any version of Microsoft Word, Wordperfect versions older than 6.0, and many other word processing formats will work. Do not send files which are Wordperfect 6.0 or any version of Microsoft Works. These file formats are particularly difficult to handle and will result in a request for another disk. If you have one of these programs, or have any program other than Microsoft Word and don't want to take any chances, convert the file to Rich Text Format (RTF) and send that. Any electronic files containing maps or other images should be in bitmap (.bmp), PICT, or TIFF formats.

NPC and Monster Stat Blocks: This is one of the most time-consuming parts of a tournament to fix, so please use the formats given below. Your tournament will be returned until the stat blocks are right. If these abbreviations do not make sense to you, further explanations of monster stats are given in more detail in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™.

Monsters:
Monster (# appearing): Int (rating); AL (codes); AC #; MV #; HD #; hp #; THAC0 #; #AT #; Dmg range (weapon); SA describe or nil; SD describe or nil; MR # or nil; SZ T/S/M/L/H/G (choose one); ML #.
Descriptive paragraph if needed.

NPCs:
Name, race and gender, Class and level: AL (codes); AC # (armor); MV #; hp #; THAC0 # (adjusted THAC0 #); #AT #; Dmg range (weapon); SA describe or nil; SD describe or nil; Str #, Dex #, Con #, Int #, Wis #, Cha #; MR #% or nil; SZ T/S/M/L/H/G (choose); ML #.
Magical Items: ring of aaa.
Spells: 1st level - xxx; 2nd level - zzz.
Special powers or skills: describe.
Descriptive paragraph if needed.

Don't fight the format. It's actually your guide in the tournament wilderness.

Where a "#" is shown in the examples above, replace it with the appropriate number for that stat.

The names of magical items and spells should be in lower case italics. Only proper names are capitalized. To state race, gender, class, and level, use the abbreviations in the chart below:

Race		Class	
h	human	F	Fighter
d	dwarf	R	Ranger
e	elf	Pal	Paladin
g	gnome	W	Wizard
half	halfling	W(I)	Illusionist
he	half-elf	W(IN)	Invoker
		W(E)	Enchanter
Gender		W(T)	Transmuter
m	male	W(N)	Necromancer
f	female	W(A)	Abjurer
		W(C)	Conjuror
		W(D)	Diviner
		P	Cleric
		P(Sp)	Specialty priest
		P(Cr)	Crusader
		P(Mo)	Monk
		D	Druid
		T	Thief
		B	Bard

For example, a human male 8th level crusader would be written as **hm P(Cr)8**.

Advanced Formatting and Style Sheets: Many word processors support style sheets, which can apply the same set of formats to whole sections of a document. This allows you to modify all sections with that format, making the entire document consistent, and easier to read. If you really want to endear yourself to your tournament coordinator, use the following styles throughout your document:

- **Normal Text:** Times or Times New Roman font, 11 point, auto leading
- **Player Text:** Times or Times New Roman font, 11 point, bold italic, auto leading
- **Section or Encounter Title:** Algerian or Helvetica font, 14 point, centered (bold if Helvetica)
- **Sub-heading** (or tier label for LIVING CITY™ events): Kino MT 14 point or Helvetica 12 point, underlined (bold if Helvetica)
- **Header:** none
- **Footer:** Times or Times New Roman 11 point, title of event at left, page number at right, single line over the whole line of text (see paragraph borders to find out how to do this). Put the round number in the center on multi-round event.

2 Include All the Elements

A submission must include:

- a legible printout of the tournament
- printouts of any maps or handouts
- a 3.5" disk with the electronic files on it
- the Standard Disclosure Form
- a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) with enough postage to cover the return of your manuscript

Each and every submission must come with its own signed standard disclosure form. We cannot read your submission without the form. If you do not have one, write to us and we will send you one. If you are submitting your tournament for a specific convention, write the name of the convention and the contact name and phone on the Disclosure Form in the space provided. You can get a standard disclosure form from Network HQ.

We are not obligated to return a manuscript which does not contain a SASE.

3 Put It In The Mail

Send it to:
RPGA Network
Tournament Coordinator
201 Sheridan Springs Rd
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

4 Submission Over E-mail

We now accept tournament submissions over email, subject to the following procedure:

a. Email files to: RPGAHQ@aol.com

b. Send a signed Standard Disclosure Form and copies of the maps and handouts in the U.S. Mail

c. Do not send files with viruses in them!

That's all there is to it. If you take the time to get these details right, then your tournament will wing through the submissions process much faster. Since we deal with many tournaments in a year, every little bit helps. ❑

Ethics Guidelines

TSR has a set of standard ethics guidelines which apply to all published products. Your tournament must comply with the following:

- Never portray evil in an attractive light. Evil characters should be foes.
- Do not give explicit details and methods of crime, drug use, or magic that could be duplicated and misused in real-life situations.
- Do not present crimes in such a manner as to inspire others to imitate criminals.
- Portray drug and alcohol abuse only as dangerous habits, not as something desirable or "cool."
- Do not represent agents of law enforcement, such as guards and constables, in such a way as to cause readers not to respect current authorities.
- Dialect, slang, and colloquialisms are fine in dialogue. However, excessive use is discouraged, especially in descriptive passages.
- Profanity, obscenity, and vulgarity are unacceptable. Do not portray or imply lust and sexual perversion.
- Drama and horror are acceptable, but avoid detailed sordid acts and excessive gore. A good writer can imply situations without graphic detail.
- Do not attack, ridicule, or even portray current religions. Ancient or mythological religions can be protrayed, but only in compliance with the other ethical considerations presented in Network writing guidelines.
- Magic is an integral part of many fantasy role-playing games. However, we will not consider submissions that include actual rituals, such as incantations and sacrifices.

Forces to Reckon With

Wayward Wizards

Tulrun of the Tent

by Eric L. Boyd

Tulrun is a reclusive archmage who dwells in a colored silken tent atop a stone platform. Usually found in the Cold Wood, on Faerûn's northernmost frontier just south of the Spine of the World mountain range, his unusual dwelling is briefly mentioned in *The North* boxed set. One of his signature spells appears in The Wizard's Workbook, a tome detailed in the *Pages from the Mages* supplement and several other sources.

Tulrun is a hulking brute of a man, frozen in his late forties. From his rippling thews to his wild red mane, Tulrun seems to fulfill his savage warrior heritage as a descendent of Uthgar.

The archmage's skin is fair, his eyes are bright blue, and he sports a deep red goatee that hangs down beneath his breastbone. The wizard's entire body is covered with fine red and white hairs, striped like a great tiger.

Tulrun wears a winter wolfskin jacket, bearskin leggings, and a woolen kilt. He carries a roughhewn ironwood staff carved in the shape of a great cat and wears a string of magical totems around his neck. A *deeppockets* spell in his coat holds material components and arcane items. On his wrists he sports a pair of mithral bracers carved into the shape of snarling tiger heads, inlaid with azure sapphires in the eyes.

History

Born Tallrunner Tigris in the Year of the Fanged Beast (640 DR), the archmage known today as Tulrun is the direct descendant of several of Netheril's legendary archmages. His ancestors intermarried with the Uthgardt barbarians of the wildlands after fleeing the collapse of their nation. Tallrunner was the first son of Chief Tawnclaw Tigris of the Red Tiger tribe and "the Mother Tiger," a shaman of Chauntea.

Like his father, Tallrunner was a weretiger and expected to lead the tribe to greatness. Unlike the elder Tigris, Tulrun was fascinated by tales of magic. When he discovered a mysterious golden scroll in a forgotten barrow beneath the tribe's ancestral lands, Tallrunner set off for Silverymoon against his father's wishes.

Upon arrival in that fair city in the Year of Mages' Dawning (659 DR), Tallrunner boldly demanded an audience with High Mage Ecamane Truesilver. In exchange for the ancient scroll he bore, the young barbarian sought an apprenticeship with a wizard of power. The High Mage arranged for him to study in a school of magic in far-off Myth Drannor, led by the Seven Wizards. (Some speculate Ecamane did not allow Tallrunner to study in Silverymoon for fear of drawing the wrath of the Red Tiger tribe which roamed the wild lands to the north of the city.)

Tallrunner was apprenticed to one of the Seven Wizards known only as the Mentor, whose other students included such luminaries as Tasirin, Caligarde, Spendelarde, and Archveult. In the elven tongue, the young barbarian's name was pronounced "TOOL-roon-AYE", and he adopted the first two syllables as his real name. Through the years, pronunciation has drifted to "TULL-run."

Tulrun rose rapidly in his mastery of spellcraft, but his barbaric upbringing and bestial nature precluded him from ever feeling at home among the civilized populace of the City of Beauty. He took to exploring the fallen lands of Netheril for long periods of time, often accompanied by Krustalonos, a crystal dragon who hailed from his clan's ancient lands and shared his unquenchable wanderlust.

In the Year of the Crawling Crags (692 DR), on one of his solo jaunts, the young wizard discovered the forgotten ruins of the Abbey of the Moon, one of Selûne's temples. Within the crumbled abbey, Tulrun encountered one of Selûne's shards. She led him through a magical portal to a realm among the wildlands of Ysgard. Tulrun spent decades in Ysgard, Arborea, and the Beastlands.

Upon his return in the Year of Many Tears (811 DR), Tulrun found changes. Myth Drannor fell to the Army of Darkness. Many former colleagues were dead or missing. Even Krustalonos had vanished without a trace.

Despairing, Tulrun became a marauding beast in the North. Not until the Year of Twelve Bells (836 DR) did he emerge from his madness under the ministrations of Lynnàsha Nharimlur, sister of High Lady Amaara of Silverymoon.

Lynnàsha and Tulrun became romantically involved, and the "Tiger Mage" reintegrated into Silverymoon's urban environment. He briefly taught at the Lady's College, but his gruff demeanor and temper made him a poor instructor. After two decades of city life, Lynnàsha and Tulrun retired to a small tower north of Silverymoon.

When High Lady Mage Elué Dualen left her rule of Silverymoon in the Year of the Toothless Skulls (876 DR) to deal with an emergency in the Outer Planes, Tulrun and Lynnàsha accompanied her. While two of the High Lady's apprentices returned to Silverymoon the next year to overthrow Warlord Lashtor's brutal regime, the rest found themselves in a war with minions of a tanar'ri lord.

Although Elué derailed the tanar'ri lord's plan to conquer the North, Lynnàsha was killed. Tulrun was unable to stop it or bring her back. The Tiger Mage retreated again to his animal side, and stalked the Beastlands.

Eventually, he was visited by an avatar of the Moonmaiden who entreated the ravening beast to return to his homeland and begin anew. Thanks to her healing touch, Tulrun returned in the Year of the Turning Wheel (937 DR), although he could not bear to set foot again in the city of his lost love.

Instead, Tulrun searched for his missing companion, Krustalonos. In the Year of Cold Claws (940 DR), Tulrun located his friend's skeleton in the lair of the Spawn of Auril, a female great white wyrm. For the greater part of a year, Tulrun hunted Sneighfanglen and her brood. One by one, the Tiger Mage slew her children and her mate, until only she and a hatchling survived. On the last day of that bloody year, Tulrun destroyed Sneighfanglen in revenge for his friend's death. Only the hatchling, Arauthator, escaped his deadly hunt.

For the next three centuries, Tulrun lived quietly beneath the boughs of the Cold Wood. During this time, he created one of the North's more notable dwellings, Tulrun's Tent, experimented with *polymorph* and shape change incantations, and worked closely with the druids of Tall Trees.

In the Year of the Black Horde (1235 DR) Tulrun finally rejoined civilization. During the Battle of Tumbleskulls, while Alustriel fought High Mage Shaloss Ethenfrost and his apprentices for control of the beleaguered city, Tulrun appeared to aid in their battle with an army of orcs. In gratitude, Alustriel declared her debt on behalf of Silverymoon, and entreated the hermit mage to help rebuild the Gem of the North. Despite painful memories, Tulrun lent his magical talents to the task of restoring Silverymoon's beauty and security. Tulrun refused to join the city's Spellguard, but aided in times of strife.

In the Year of the Snarling Dragon (1279 DR), Tulrun abruptly returned to his magical abode and broke contact with his adopted city. A fortnight later, his retreat came under assault by 20 frost giant wizards. For the next ten years, Tulrun battled annual waves of attackers. His foes ranged from remorhaz to haun astride haundar. All shared a fierce determination to overwhelm him. Alustriel and the wizards of Spellguard offered assistance, but Tulrun barred them from approaching.

The attacks ceased in the Year of the Sighing Serpent (1289 DR). Alustriel later deduced that Tulrun predicted the assaults. Fearing that Silverymoon might be destroyed, the Tiger Mage retreated to his home. He accepted no assistance, fearful of losing yet another close companion.

The archmage quickly realized that the attacks were sent by Arauthator, spawn of Sneighfanglen. (Arauthator is detailed in DRAGON® magazine # 230 in the *Wyrms of the North* column.) While Arauthator bore little love for his late siblings and mother, he did fear the archmage who slew them, and thought it prudent to remove his presumed enemy.

Tulrun journeyed to Arauthator's lair and proposed a truce. Arauthator agreed, and foreswore further attacks against Tulrun, Silverymoon, Quaervaar, Sundabar, Everlund, or the human inhabitants of the Cold Wood and Moonwood. In return, Tulrun foreswore revenge against the last of Sneighfanglen's spawn. Tulrun's reasons for negotiating such an agreement are unknown, but Alustriel suspects that he saw the work of a greater evil behind Arauthator's machinations and sought to draw it into the open.

Regardless, neither Tulrun nor the white dragon have broken their agreement. Meanwhile, Tulrun has slowly begun unveiling the individual or group strong enough to manipulate one of the North's most powerful wyrms.

By the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), Tulrun has again withdrawn to such an extent that he is a hermit whose only regular human contact is with the wandering Red Tiger tribe of the Cold Woods who revere him as a legendary ancestor.

Next month: tips on using Tulrun, and vital statistics.

Island Campaigns

Part 4: the Wild, Wild Wildspace

A World of Your Own

by Roger E. Moore

We've examined oceanic islands, and we've examined island demi-planes. Where else can an AD&D® islands campaign be set? In this issue, we look to the planets and stars to generate an exciting, long-playing island campaign in the wildspace of the SPELLJAMMER® setting—with links to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign.

Though he has a passing interest in "ground-based" game settings, Stephen's true love is for the SPELLJAMMER® campaign. After collecting numerous SPELLJAMMER products from game auctions and hobby-store sales, Stephen is eager to start his own campaign—but everyone else in his group is involved in a series of FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventures and is reluctant to leave the familiar lands of Faerûn on the world of Toril.

Stephen's group uses a "round-robin" DM system in which a group of willing gamers take turns acting as the group DM. Stephen can easily be a DM himself—but how can he get the players excited about an off-world adventure? How can he connect his wildspace campaign to the group's FORGOTTEN REALMS set-up once the current adventure ends? Stephen picks up his copy of SJR2 *Realmspace* and flips through it, eventually settling down to read one part in detail: the Tears of Selûne.

A Whirlpool of Worldlets

The Tears is a cluster of hundreds of small asteroids that trail the moon Selûne in orbit around Toril. The center of the cluster is equidistant from both Selûne and Toril, so that the three form the points of an equilateral triangle with sides 183,000 miles long. (Those who know astronomy would say that the Tears are Toril's L5 point.)

The Tears form a close-knit group of islands with radically varying populations. It should be easy for any group of Faerûnian adventurers (with nudges from the DM) to get to and from the Tears, which are visible in the night sky of Toril. It should also be possible to make a venture into the Tears relevant to a "groundling" campaign in some way—the recovery of a lost artifact or kidnapping victim transported from Faerûn to the Tears, for instance.

Stephen notes that the Rock of Bral (a mile-long asteroid-city described in several SPELLJAMMER products) can easily be placed in the Tears as an adventure setting. He elects to do so; it is an excellent place to introduce "groundlings" to the wonders of wildspace. His search for gaming materials turns up the following sources:

- SPELLJAMMER *AD&D Adventures in Space* boxed set, *Lorebook of the Void*, page 94 (Tears of Selûne), and *Concordance of Arcane Space*, pags 94-96 (Rock of Bral);
- SJR2 *Realmspace* accessory, pages 29-31 (Tears of Selûne);
- SJR5 *Rock of Bral* accessory;
- DRAGON® Magazine issue #159, "Bazaar of the Bizarre: Magic from the Stars" (notes from the Rock of Bral);

• DUNGEON® Adventures issue #28, "Visitors from Above" (adventure leading to the Tears of Selûne);

• SPELLJAMMER Cloakmaster Cycle, vol. three: *The Maelstrom's Eye* (visitor's description of the Rock of Bral); and

• The recent FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure, *Stardock.*

The Measure of the Tears

It is important to figure out the full expanse of the Tears and their individual sizes. Travel times depend on distance, and a planetoid's size determines what you can put there. According to *Realmspace*, the Tears are each size A, meaning each has a maximum diameter of 10 miles across. Given that there are "hundreds" of asteroids here, they will need plenty of space to avoid colliding. Stephen assumes, however, that nearly all of the Tears follow stable orbits around their central worldlet, Castle, and collisions are almost unknown.

Stephen decides the whole planetoid cluster is shaped like a flat disk 80,000 miles across, rotating around Castle (so-called because of the beautiful castle that stands there). The cluster is seen edge-on from Toril, so it looks like a line of bright, slowly moving stars trailing Selûne across the night sky.

Travel times across the Tears are fast. It takes only 10 minutes (10 rounds, or 1 turn) to leave a planetoid and move to the edge of its gravity field. It then takes at most *one minute* (usually less) to reach any spot in the Tears from any other spot, after which another 10 minutes is spent moving through the gravity field of the destination world to land. For gaming purposes, then, a trip across the Tears from one world to another always takes just 20 minutes (2 turns).

A trip between Toril and any one of the Tears takes 50 minutes (5 turns). Trips between the Tears and the great moon, Selûne, take 40 minutes (4 turns); between Toril and Selûne, 70 minutes (7 turns). Other distances and travel times in Realmspace are given in *Realmspace* and the *Concordance of Arcane Space*, page 91.

Such rapid speeds mean that trade is shockingly swift between any of the Tears, Toril, and Selûne. Except for the great expense in purchasing and maintaining a spelljammer that can touch down on and take off from land or sea, as well as the rarity of such craft, it would seem logical to transport goods across Faerûn in record time by spelljammer. With the limited size of cargo holds, a spelljammer captain would certainly look for goods of small size and enormous value: magical items and artifacts, gems and jewelry, rare spices and monsters, wealthy passengers, etc.

Such speeds also mean that military or pirate attacks on any asteroid could come at any moment from any direction. The Tears are very vulnerable to assault by wildspace navies. Once a spelljammer fleet achieves "wildspace superiority" above a world by destroying its local navy, it can bombard the world's cities, fortresses, armies, and other targets at leisure, or else drop invasion forces wherever it likes.

Stephen considers this possibility. How could an asteroid's population defend itself? And how many people could live on an asteroid's surface, anyway? Stephen makes up a table showing the surface areas of spherical asteroids of various sizes up to 10 miles, then assumes (after much reading) that about 500 people could fit in comfortable crowding per square mile of land. These 500 people need land to grow food and live, air to breathe, and water to drink; Earthlike conditions must prevail on the asteroid! After a few minutes punching buttons on his calculator, Stephen comes up with the table shown below.

Note that the surface area of a 10-mile-diameter asteroid is less than that of many real-world islands, such as Oahu, Tahiti, Okinawa, Martinique, or Guadeloupe. An 8-mile-diameter asteroid has the surface area of Guam. These are *very small places*! Also note that these asteroids need not be spherical; they could be potato-shaped, flat, or shaped like polyhedral dice, and no wildspace captain would bat an eyelash.

After some more figuring, Stephen decides the best defense against wildspace assault is a good, deep hole in the ground. Attack shelters as large as caverns would be dug out on heavily populated or important worldlets, easy enough to do with basic mining techniques. (Some shelters in the Tears might actually be old mines dug by local spacefaring dwarves.) These caverns would be stocked with food, water, weapons, and other supplies, with numerous tunnels to the surface.

Small wildspace colonies would benefit from having their own spelljamming forces; even a small vessel can be packed with long-range weapons and marines. If two asteroids orbit one another very closely or several asteroids travel together in close formation, each asteroid's defenders can fire upon wildspace attackers and produce interlocking fields of fire for mutual defense.

Individual asteroid colonies in the Tears thus stand the best chance for survival if they maintain a common spelljammer fleet that actively patrols their homelands. They can also carefully haul very small asteroids into positions as tiny moons of their homeworlds; a big rock 100 yards across can be tunneled out to hold military personnel, supplies, and ammunition for surface weapons like catapults and ballistae.

The *Lorebook of the Void* (pages 93-94) states that the Tears are home to "long-standing civilizations" such as "human nations, beholder factions, elven outposts, and other races." Certainly, the humans and elves at least will have taken the above possibilities to heart, and their homeworlds will be well defended. Such defenses are sorely needed given the other inhabitants of the cluster and the many outside dangers that face them.

Next month: A World of Your Own take a pause. But In January, we return with: Populating the Tears of Selûne.

Surface Areas and Populations of Spherical Planetoids

Diameter (miles)	*Surface Area (square miles)*	*Maximum Population**
1	3.14	1,570
2	12.57	6,285
3	28.27	14,135
4	50.27	25,135
5	78.54	39,270
6	113.10	56,550
7	153.94	76,970
8	201.06	100,530
9	254.47	127,235
10	314.16	157,080

* Surface population assumes 500 people per square mile, with dwellings, farmland, water, air, livestock, etc., but no imports.

Conventions

Featuring Network Sanctioned Tournaments

ORK CON '96
When: Nov 1-3 **Where:** Corpus Christi, TX–at the Howard Johnson Airport Hotel
What's Happening: Masquerade Ball, LARP, still looking for GMs & referees for all games! Pre-regs staying in hotel get in free.
Cost: $10 for the weekend. $5 one day
Contact: 512/814-2806

LEGENDS & LEGIONS '97
When: Feb 14–16 **Where:** Talahassee, FL –Collegiate Village Inn
What's Happening: Cahrity Auction (TBA), painted miniatures contest, role-playing, card, board, miniatures games
Cost: $25 til Dec 31, $40 after
Contact: David Glenn, 217 Coulmbia Dr., Talahassee, FL, 32304. 904/575-6722

GAMICON ETA
When: Feb 21–23 **Where:** Iowa City, IA –at the National Guard Armory
What's Happening: RPGs, board games, miniatures, auction, RPGA events, more. Guests: Lester Smith, Aaron Allston. FREE SODA all weekend!
Cost: $12 pre-reg, $10 GMs
Contact: Gamicon Eta PO 525, Iowa City, IA 52244.

COSCON 97
When: Mar 7–9 **Where:** Butler, PA –Days Inn Conference Center
What's Happening: RPGA events including Living City and Benefit, board game,s miniatures, free-forms, new game demos, computer room, movies, more.
Cost: $15 til 2/25, $20 after
Contact: send SASE to Circle of Swords, PO 2126, Butler, PA 16003

CORPSE CON III
When: Nov 1-3 **Where:** Schweinfurt, Germany–Panorama Hotel
What's Happening: AD&D® German Championship, DRAGON DICE®, Rage, and Magic Tournaments. Guests: Larry Elmore, Lester Smith, Brom, Jeff Grubb
Cost: $18 for the weekend, $7 one day
Contact: Robert Moore, Ruckertstr. 15, D-97421 Schweinfurt, Germany

SHAUNCON XIII
When: Nov 22–24 **Where:** Kansas City MO–Holiday Inn South
What's Happening: RPGA Network events, including LIVING CITY™, LIVING JUNGLE™, LIVING DEATH™, 2-round feature, Masters, Grand Masters, Benefit, and the Great Plains Regional Finals. Other events include, Amber, Call of Cthulhu, GURPS, Necromunda, Paranoia, Puffing Billy, Shadowrun, Star Wars, Warhammer 40K/Fantasy, Vampire, M:tG, Highlander, GANGBUSTERS™ Interactive, art show, charity auction, seminars, and more!
Guests: Eric Trautmann, West End Games editor/designer; Bill Smith, West End Games Star Wars designer; Miranda Horner, TSR editor
Cost: $18 until Nov 13, $20 at the door, $10 one day
Contact: RPGKC, PO 7457, Kansas City, MO, 64116-0157 phone: 816/455-5020. email: ShaunCon@aol.com or visit our website: http://users.aol.com/RPGKC/RPGKC.html

CONCENTRIC
When: Mar 13–16 **Where:** Rosemont, IL–Clarion Hotel
What's Happening:
Cost: $10 daily
Contact: Heather Josten, 114 Euclid Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068. 708/993-1165 or 312/409-2943

ROCK-CON XXIV GAME FAIR
When: Nov 9-10 **Where:** Rockford, IL –held at Rockford Lutheran HS
What's Happening: RPGA® Network events including 2 LIVING CITY, 6th Annual Megainternational Empire Builder Championship Tourney, SA game auction
Cost: $5 for one or both days
Contact: M. Schneider 1147 Good Ave, Park Ridge, IL 60068

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '97
When: Mar 28–30 **Where:** Carbondale, IL–Southern Illinois University
What's Happening: RPGA events, AD&D, Shadowrun, A&A, Warhammer 40K, Magic, many other card, RPG, miniatures and board games.
Cost: $10 pre-reg, $12 at door
Contact: Joel Nadler at 618/529-4630 or email: ECGamCon@aol.com

TROPICON XV
When: Nov 15–17 **Where:** Ft. Lauderdale, FL–Doubletree Guest Suite
What's Happening: South Florida's largest SF/gaming con. Guests: David Gerrold, Peter David. RPGA tournaments, GURPS, Magic, Vampire, Miniatures
Cost: $23 adv or $28 at the door
Contact: George Peterson 954/524-1274. sfsfs@scifi.squawk.com

CONSTITUTION V
When: Feb 14–16 **Where:** Arlington, VA –Quality Hotel
What's Happening: RPGA events, including first-run LIVING CITY, other RPGs LARPs, board games, Clay-o-rama, CCGs
Cost: variable
Contact: Mary Schmitt, 2205 Luzerne Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Consti5@aol.com

BRANSCON I
When: Feb 28–Mar 2 **Where:** Branson, MO–Thousand Hills Golf Resort
What's Happening: RPGA LIVING Events, AD&D, Cthulhu, more! Thunder Castle & Pelicar onsite! Board games, etc.
Cost: $15 adv or $19 at the door
Contact: Laurie Fox, 2436 Fall Creek Rd. #4, Branson, MO 65616; fox@cofo.edu; 417/336-5245

AT SEA 1997
When: Apr 5–12 **Where:** Gulf of Mexico
What's Happening: RPGA LIVING events, Team Decathlon, DRAGONLANCE: 5TH AGE, BIRTHRIGHT, INWO, Vampire. Cozumel, Jamaica, Playa del Carmen, more! Special Guest: Jean Rabe
Cost: $1,099 and up
Contact: G.O.A.T. PO 3116, Austin, TX 78764-3116. call: 512/443-4251

GARDEN STATE GAMESFAIRE
When: Nov 21–24 **Where:** Cranbury, NJ–at the Holiday Inn–Center Point
What's Happening: RPGA events including LIVING CITY, Boardgames, CCGs, LARP, and Miniatures events
Cost: $15 adv or $20 at the door
Contact: Andrew Dawson, 470 Ironstone Dr., Boyerstown, PA, 19512. 610/367-4857; asmpd@fast.net

ORCCON 20
When: Feb 14–17 **Where:** Los Angeles, CA–L.A. Airport Wyndham Hotel
What's Happening: family, strategy, card, role-playing, miniature, and computer games. Flea market, auction, demos.
Cost: $27.50 pre-reg, $33 at door
Contact: Strategicon, 333 N. San Fernando Blvd., Burbank, CA 91502. call: 818/848-1748

AMERICON
When: Mar 7–9 **Where:** America Online
What's Happening: Role playing games, RPGA tournaments including a LIVING CITY event, M:tG tournament, and seminars with company reps.
Cost: free
Contact: OGFAvatar@aol.com

LCD APR '97 GAME DAY
When: Apr 12 **Where:** Chicago, IL–St. Henry's, 6325 N. Hoyne
What's Happening: variety of role-playing, card, board, and miniature games, including RPGA LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH Star Wars, and more.
Cost: $5 ($3 for judges)
Contact: call John Cannon: 773/465-9130. email: johnc1967@aol.com

SYNDICON '96
When: Nov 29-Dec 1 **Where:** Portage, IN–Ramada Inn
What's Happening: AD&D, GURPS, Killer, World of Darkness, Arena PC v. PC M:tG, comics, RPGA events, more
Cost: $15 pre-reg by Oct 15
Contact: SyndiCon '96 PO 1602 Portage, IN 46368. 219/763-4802 after 4 PM M-F or leave message w/address

TOTAL CONFUSION XI
When: Feb 20-23 **Where:** Andover, MA
What's Happening: AD&D, Assault, A&A, Battletech, Call of Cthulhu, Car Wars, Diplomacy, GURPS, Japanimation, M:tG, Paranoia. Rail Road, Shadowrun, Star Wars, World of Darkness, more
Cost: $30 adv, $40 at the door
Contact: Total Confusion PO 403 N. Chelmsford, MA 01863. 508/251-9321

CY-CON
When: Mar 1–2 **Where:** Ames, IA–Memorial Union, Iowa State Univ.
What's Happening: LIVING CITY, RPGA events, M:tG, Star Wars, Warhammer, Battletech, miniatures, costume contest, 1st 125 preregs get free miniature
Cost: $12 til 2/1, $18 at door (–$4 RPGA)
Contact: Karen Faber, Friley 2335, Ames, IA 50012; CYCON@iastate.edu

REIN-CON-ATION
When: Apr 25-27 **Where:** Hyannis, MA –Radisson Hotel
What's Happening: role-playing, live action, card games, board games, miniatures, miniaturespainting contests, charity event
Cost: $20 pre-reg; $25 on-site
Contact: Rein-con-ation, PO 236, Hyannis, MA 02601

SUNQUEST '97
When: Jan 2–5 **Where:** Orlando, FL –Marriott Orlando Resort
What's Happening: 17 RPGA events, miniatures, card games, LARP, computer games, art show. Guests: Mike Stackpole, Tim Bradstreet, Jay Tummelson
Cost: $20 before 12/1, $25 at door
Contact: SunQuest, PO 677069, Orlando FL 32867-7069. 407/679-9666

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Lake Geneva, WI 53147

MILWAUKEE SUMMER REVEL
When: Jun 6–8 **Where:** Milwaukee, WI –The Hotel Wisconsin
What's Happening: first-run LIVING CITY, LIVING JUNGLE, RPGA events, CoC, BOOT HILL®, board games, miniatures, CCGs, Guests: Margaret Weis, Don Perrin, Dave Gross, Jim Ward, Tom Wham, more!
Contact: Milwaukee Summer Revel, PO 779, New Munster, WI 53152

Classifieds...

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PENPAL: My name is Chuck, I'm looking for anyone interested in writing about anything, especially AD&D and FORGOTTEN REALMS. I'm 34 and would like to hear from you. Will answer all letters. Charles Anderson, 1600 Walters Mill Rd., Somerset, PA 15510

GENERAL: I'm inquiring about any old D&D material you are looking to sell. I am also interested in buying any of the MYSTARA World text (Gazeteer, Poor Wizard's Almanac, Audio CD Adventures, Compendium, etc.) We also seek any any gamers living in the Southwest Wisconsin area who would like to join our campaign. Rob Rickard, Common World Roleplaying, PO 265, Wauzeka, WI 53826

I NEED POLYHEDRON #51, 54, 42, 41, 46, 21, 28, 29, 30. I have many to trade from assorted issue from 1-110. Reply to John Daniel at babayaga@southwind.net or 4562 N. Westlake Court, Wichita, KS 67220.

INTERESTED IN TRADING LIVING CITY items? I am willing to act as a brokerage house. Write or e-mail me with your thoughts and I will do the same. Rick Vogel 4341 S. Westnedge Ave. Ste 2105 Kalamazoo, MI 49008-3287 or rvogel@vogelcpa.com

WHITE KNIGHT, an independent fantasy, science fiction gaming magazine is looking for writers, reporters, and artists. For more information or a free sample issue, write: White Knight c/o Bill Brierton, 12420 Old Colony Dr., Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-5000

FOLLOWERS of the Lord of the Dead, believers in the final justice, worshipers of Kelemvor: make your voice heard! Chronicle your ranks and submit your names! Silence the voices in Ravens Bluff who doubt our faithful. Together we will be recognized! Embalmers, morticians, others dealing with death welcome. Contact Glenn Smith (Delorian Webbster), PO 11166, Daytona Beach, FL 32120. Build up the temple of Kelemvor!

LEGENDS, the first APA for Earthdawn, is in its third year and looking for new members. If you'd like to share your fiction, creatures, adventures, spells, magic items, disciplines, and thoughts on the game with other Earrhdawn players, please join us. For more info, send a SASE to: Richard Tomasso, PO 1672, Merrimack, NH, 03054-1672. email: tomasso@an.hp.com http://members.tripod.com/~LegendsAPA

ARE YOU SERIOUS about gaming? Would you rather think your way through an encounter than blow it up?Then I want you in my campaign. I'm Ken Newquist, and I'm looking for mature gamers, ages 18+ interested in starting an AD&D® campaign and/or an RPG club in the LeHigh Valley/Slate

SOUTH CAROLINA: Spartanburg/Greenville area. Established gaming group looking for new members for AD&D campaign starting soon. Experience not necessary. Call Matt: 864/574-8930

PEN PAL: I'm 13 years old and interested in fantasy writing. Write: Ken Houston, 640 E. Ferguson, Wood River, IL 62095 or email: Rain3@xband.com

BUYING RPGA special modules (R1-4, RPGA1-4). They were issued in the '80s. If you have these for sale, send me info about condition and price. I'm also buying most other used gaming items (esp. supermodule reprints, the H series, FORGOTTEN REALMS, World of GREYHAWK, and 1st ed. AD&D), send prices and listings to Michael Cox, PO 5205, Kendall Park, NJ 08824. Will trade new releases for used items. email: StackMC@aol.com

HELLO WORLD my name is Mark Smith, and I want to start a club with a friend. We are 14-year-old males looking for anyone in Ogden, Layton, or Huntsville who wanrs to help start a club. Or if you just want to play now and then or have a club going, call: 801/547-8038. Leave a message or call Cody: 801/745-2606. Write: Mark Smith 1829 E. Hayes Dr., Layton, UT 84040

WANTED: AD&D players in the Worcester, MA area to join campaign or quick games. All settings except DRAGONLANCE. Open to all suggestions and variant rules. Players and DMs alike wecome. Email: HIKKER5242@aol.com

LOOKING FOR SOFTWARE reviewed in DRAGON magazine a couple of years ago. The program is "Worldsystem: Mapmaker", produced by Morningstar Publications in Miami, FL. It was reviewed by Lester Smith in his Role Playing Reviews column in issue #209 (Sept. '94). The address listed is invalid with no forwarding address or telephone listing. Does anyone have any info? Do you have an old copy to sell? Contact: Pierre Parent, 11301 SE Nancy Rd, Vancouver, WA 98664. 360/212-2636 pierre_parent@hp-vcd.vcd.hp.com

TRAPPED in the bowels of the ancient ruins of the granite halls, this cleric seeks info on power campaigns, demonspawn, and dragonrider kits. Character info: STR 19, DEX 18, CON 17, INT 17, WIS 19, CHA 11, COM 10. Any advice would be helpful. Send inquiries to: Robert Ward 156842, O. S. R. PO 514 A211. Granite, OK 73547

INTERESTED IN obtaining a used or new copy of DRAGON® magazine 105 to complete a set. Call Jeff Williams: 702/247-1484 E-mail: williaj9@nevada.edu

JOIN THE ONLY open RPGA club in Florida. meetings held second Friday of each month at 7 pm. We discuss business, then play RPGA sanctioned tournaments. At least one game is LIVING CITY. We play on UCF campus, education bldg, room 340.Contact us at PO 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069, call 407/679-9666, email: sunquest@sundial.net

WANTED: GAZ10 Orcs of Thar and DRAGON magazine #189. Also interested in finding gamers in the Nashville/West Middle TN area. Write: Ed May, 7094 Hwy 13 S., Waverly, TN 37185

WANTED: I've been playing/Dming D&D about 16 years, would love to wrap my claws around modules I grew up with. Looking for S2, S3, EX1, EX2, I1, WG10, WG11, WG12, WGA1, WGA2, WGA3, *Legends & Lore*, *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, or other interesting modules of old. Send prices and descriptions to Jubjub, c/o J.M. Winn, 1600 Garland St. #2, Lakewood, CO 80215

WANTED: Highlander cards, esp. promo cards, including those in DRAGON #229, Collect May issue, Conjure #9, Inquest #12, Pyramid #19, Scrye #13 and April, May, June issues of Realms of Fantasy, Science Ficition Age, Sci-Fi entertainment. Fifty cents/card. Write: John Daniel, 4562 N. Westlake Court, Wichita, KS 67220. email: babayaga@southwind.net I also buy/sell/trade RPGs.

Network Adventure Design Contest '96

Here's your chance to **Win Fame And Prizes** as a tournament author!

The RPGA® Network proudly announces this year's Invitational Adventure Design Contest. Here's your chance to win fame and prizes! This year the contest runs in coordination with the WINTER FANTASY™ convention, our training ground for authors and game masters. This contest is open only to Network members. Each contestant must design an adventure that displays his or her flexibility and creativity as an author. Winners will be announced at the WINTER FANTASY show in February.

Design Rules

- Your submissions must be for one of the following game systems: AD&D® 2nd Edition game from TSR, Inc., *Star Wars* or *Masterbook/D6 System* from West End Games, *Shadowrun* or *Earthdawn* from FASA Corp., or *Call of Cthulhu* from Chaosium, Inc. All submissions must specify the level of characters for which the adventure is intended.
- Submitting characters for your tournament is optional, but welcome.
- Write your name and Network membership number on every page of your entry.
- Entries must be typed. Computer print-outs are acceptable if they can be read easily. Do not use fancy fonts. Each submission should be double-spaced and should have a one-inch margin on all sides.
- Submit two copies of your contest entry to aid judge reviews.
- Each submission must include six encounters. Of these, one must non-hostile, where the player characters negotiate; one must be a trap or dilemma; one must include a battle; one must be an obstacle; the remaining two are left to your discretion. Encounters may blend these elements, but all must be present and identifiable.
- The entry must not exceed 32 pages, including maps and handouts.

Contest Entries

- You may enter as many times as you like, but you can win only one prize.
- The Network reserves the right to edit all submisssions before use in the tournament program. No other use of the materials shall be made without an agreement between the authors of the submission and the Network and the company holding the copyright for the game on which the entry is based.

Judging Criteria

- Adherence to game rules.
- Good manuscript presentation, including accurate grammar, punctuation, spelling.
- Descriptive ability — the skill to weave an image and mood throughout the presentation.
- Originality — this includes innovative use of existing creatures and items as well as the use of creatures and items which you create.
- Fun. Is your scenario enjoyable? Would people playing this have a good time? This does not mean that you need to present a comic adventure. Even a frightening RAVENLOFT™ adventure can be fun to play.

All entries must be postmarked by December 26, 1996 to qualify.

WIN BIG!

1st Prize

$100 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and an engraved plaque

2nd Prize

$50 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and and engraved plaque

3rd Prize

$25 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and and engraved plaque

We may also award additional prizes for Honorable Mention!

Official Entry Form
Network Invitational Design Contest

This form or a copy of it, and a signed Standard Disclosure Form, must be completed, signed, and returned with each entry. The entrant warrants to TSR, Inc. that all submissions are original and do not infringe upon the rights of third parties.

Statement of entry and agreement: I hereby enter the work described below in the 1996 RPGA Network Invitational Adventure Design Contest. I agree to the terms and conditions of this contract as set forth in the rules and this Official Entry Form.

Title of Entry: _____

Name of Entrant: _____

Network Membership Number: _____

Signature of Entrant: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Province: _____

Country, ZIP/Postal Code: _____

Legal guardian: _____
(for submitters under the age of 18)

Game System: _____

Level of Characters: _____

The Ravens Bluff Trumpeter

Editor-in-Chief: Fred Faber
City News: Clio Hesperin
Society Editor: Jacinth Moonspring

War Slows
But Still Relentless

The war which threatens to destroy our city plods into yet another month. The excitement and danger has mellowed into a drawn-out siege, and the marauders show no sign of leaving.

Field General Lord Charles Blacktree reports that for every wizard and priest, siege engine, or flying eagle we muster, Warlord Jelan seems able to field six spellcasters, five siege engines, and an equal number of flying beasts.

The Ministry of Art reports that their talents are stretched thin maintaining a magical defense of the city, which it claims prevents scrying and teleportation into the city by enemy forces.

Divinations as to the nature or location of Warlord Jelan reveal nothing, as if this reputed leader does not exist.

Our troops have seen action many times in recent months, but there have been no conclusive battles. Troops on the wall have repelled hordes of humanoids. One soldier joked that every goblin in the Realms seem to be attacking.

Enemy wizards have opened gaps in the walls, which have been just as magically repaired, and our forces in the field have been ambushed and attacked from a distance time and time again.

Ravens Bluff forces have had only two major victories since the first attack was repelled. In early summer, the army was able to find one of the enemy's major supply bases, located up the river nar Highback Forest, and by using a clever three-prong attack with magical damping, eliminated the site.

This was believed to have struck a major blow against the enemy's ability to muster goblinoids, and Intelligence operatives report that the numbers of goblinoids are dropping, though they may not appear to be.

The second victory was the battle of Mossbridges, reported in last issue.

Since Mossbridges, there has been a lull in enemy activity. Attacks against the walls continue, but these appear, according to Lord Blacktree, more as harrassment attacks than actual attempts to breach the walls. Blacktree said that he believes the enemy is fighting a war of attrition, and has ordered troops to avoid engagements until clear and decisive targets are identified.

Brutal Slaying Latest in Thief Gang War

The body of Sergeant Geldorf of the City Watch was discovered in a Crow's End alley last night. A nearby Nightwatch patrol heard a gurgling cry, and discovered the dead Watch officer.

Geldorf was slain by a single dagger in the back, which was left in the body. This style of killing is usually the work of the Black Talon Gang.

Ward Commander Chiapa said that he plans to take to the streets again after almost 12 years as Ward Commander and pursue the murderers. Rumor also abounds that Tevlo Spath has been asked to investigate. Spath, as always, refused to comment.

Geldorf served as the day shift sergeant for more than 15 years. According to subordiantes, he had a reputation for trodding on others for career advancement, and took credit for actions of those under his command.

Society News

—Jacinth Moonspring

Dear readers, news has poured in since the War Festival (GENCON® Game Fair LIVING CITY™ Interactive). I must tell you more about the year's greatest Society bash. It was the sort of event to die for. Believe me, some did!

Last time, I recounted the events surrounding the death of a certain Golden Rooster. I have since learned that one of Ravens Bluff's socialites played a significant (and fatal) role in the investigation. **Analaina Blessing** (played by Mechele Hunt of CA), a swashbuckler of some renown, apparently stuck her nose into Sir Lorien's business. Later, while she and other investigators interviewed suspects, she recieved a well-placed dagger in the back! Although efforts to revive her failed, one of the gods of the Civic Religion returned her to life. Priests of Tymora, Selune, and Lliira have taken credit.

On a different note, the War Festival served as a sort-of Coming Out party for one of our late blooming debutantes. Our own **Lady Amber Lynn Thoden**, daughter of Baron Thoden, showed up dressed in a pink chiffon gown of her own design. She wowed the crowd! Perhaps it was the strategically placed rose, but she had the attention of our city's eligible bachelors. By the end of the day, her name was on everyone's lips. I understand she spent a good bit of time on the arm of the charlatan posing as our missing Lord Mayor O'Kane, but she was also seen in the company of several knights of different orders, a few priests (especially Lliirans), and even a self-serving rogue or two. **Dusk** (played by Nicky Rea of NC) recieved Lady Thoden's special gift, a ruby red magical sword. Reportedly, Lady Thoden was impressed with the dark elf's perseverance in the Darkarrow investigation. My advice: Keep going, Amber. You've got it; keep using it! Let others worry about consequences!

Society column written by Wayne S. Melnick of FL. If you have printworthy news to share, contact Wayne c/o RPGA® Network or directly by e-mail at: Cateyes01@aol.com

NOTES FROM HQ

Jeff's Convention Announcement

I want to talk about convention this month. Surprise! Convention info! But I want to do something different than usual. I want to address concerns I've read and had lately, ask you for input about the focus of POLYHEDRON® Newszine.

In this issue's letter column, Rick Brill says, "...why not let [POLYHEDRON Newszine] be devoted to topics and events most commonly associated with the Network (i.e. conventions)."

In response, I'd say, because I believe the thing most commonly associated with the Network is role-playing games, not conventions. And RPGs are a much larger field than conventions.

I agree, cons are fun. I've been to plenty. The RPGA Network presence and involvement with RPG conventions is one of the best things the con circuit has going for it. Go cons. Yay cons. I have no problem with conventions.

Having said that, I don't want conventions to be a focus in the Newszine.

I've seen the membership database, and the fact is, the *majority* of Network members never darken the door of a convention. Though many members attend and enjoy conventions, many more do not.

Bearing this in mind, when I plan for POLYHEDRON, I must ask myself, "Am I best serving our whole membership by focusing on conventions?"

If you're going to cons already, you're getting a lot of value from the Network. You get friendship, entertainment, or whatever you personally receive. You're doing fine, and you're a good example of what makes the Network work. But POLYHEDRON is the only Network program which touches every member, whether you're a 20-a-year con junkie or a person tucked far away from role-playing resources.

As the man responsible for making Poly a viable, worthwhile resource for ALL members, I can't in good faith, increase, or even sustain the amount of convention coverage POLYHEDRON has had in the past and think that I'm serving our members' needs.

We have members who are too young to drive or travel from their city. We have members who live or are stationed in distant countries. We have members who are incarcerated. We have members with physical disabilities who don't have the money or the health to attend conventions.

What are we doing to involve and satisfy these members? How can we help them enjoy their games more? How can HQ give them more value? Where do they fit in if the Newszine, their largest (and in some cases, only) connection to the Network, concentrates on something which has no bearing on them?

These are not rhetorical questions. These are questions I must answer to make POLYHEDRON a viable resource for all of our members. They are also questions we must collectively answer to be a unified body of role-playing gamers, and fully use the power we possess.

However we ultimately decide to answer these questions, I don't believe enhanced convention coverage in the Newszine is the answer.

Maybe part of the answer is to enable them to go to cons! Maybe part of that answer is to focus more on home games in the Newszine. Perhaps the answer is not what the magazine can do for members, but what members can do for each other.

Rick actually hit on the true benefit of RPGA membership when he listed the people he has enjoyed playing with. *The true benefit of a Network is that it puts you in touch with people.* The games, as much as we love them, are just a happy means to an end. People are the important part.

A few weeks ago, I played several hilarious games of Yahtzee with Jeff Grubb and Sean Reynolds (our online guy). Yahtzee is pretty inane. Yahtzee is an exercise in probability judgment. Yahtzee was not the reason I had fun. Jeff and Sean were. People are the reason one enjoys any social activity.

Therefore, it's no stretch to say that the more people we choose to involve in our games, the more fun we will have, and the better the Network will be. Our resources are directly proportional to the amount and variety of people we have working with us.

For the Network to focus extensively on an aspect of the games which excludes members, harms us all. That idea is abstract, but is as deep a truth as you'll find in these pages.

I am happy for you to disagree with me, but consider these questions and comments carefully. We ignore them to our own detriment.

—JEFF

Living City Rulebook

Paladins—
Some LIVING CITY paladin players have expressed confusion on the limit on magical items a paladin may own. Therefore, we offer this clarification:

All paladins must adhere to the AD&D® 2nd edition rules, as stated in the LIVING CITY character creation guidelines. This means that LIVING CITY paladins are limited to 10 magical items. Of the ten, a paladin may possess one suit of magical armor, one magical shield, four magical weapons, and four miscellaneous magical items.

For LIVING CITY, a case of bolts or a quiver of arrows counts as one item; cases and bolts hold 20 missiles. Missiles with special powers, such as *arrows of direction* or *slaying*, count as individual items. Up to 10 potions of the same type count as one item. Potions of different types count as different items. For example, 10 *potions of extra healing* fill one "slot," 12 *potions of extra healing* count as two slots, while six *potions of extra healing* and one *potion of speed* fill two. For all other items, each certificate counts as one item.

If you play a paladin, please bring your character into compliance as soon as possible. Excess magical items must be donated to NPC sources (removed from the game). "A paladin won't look for ambiguities to exploit; he remains true to the spirit as well as the letter of these rules." —*Complete Paladin's Handbook*

Tournament Coordinators—
Please send your completed LIVING CITY Who's Who sheets to Don Weatherbee as soon as your convention is over. The database of player characters is a valuable tool, but only when it is complete. Thanks for your help.

LIVING CITY Judges and Prospective Judges! Come to the WINTER FANTASY™ show, and attend one of our two LIVING CITY Judge Discussions. Talk over difficult situations and how to handle them with other judges. Share your experience or learn from others.